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PDEA ready to tell all

Senate set to probe 'Alabang 3'

By Tarra Quismundo

THE PHILIPPINE DRUG ENforcement Agency (PDEA) is prepared to present before the Senate proof of bribe offers for the release of three rich young men held for drug peddling, the agency chief told the INQUIRER yesterday.

"We will just tell them what transpired, show them text messages we received about the bribes ... texts to officers who got direct offers," PDEA Director General Dionisio Santiago said when reached by phone yesterday.

The Senate has expressed interest in investigating the alleged P50-million bribe for the justice department's dismissal of charges against the so-called "Alabang Boys"—Richard Gaston Brodett, Jorge Jardiana Joseph and Joseph Ramirez Tecson.

PDEA A4

Pangandamans' 'sober image' soiled at Valley

By Ryan D. Rosauro
Inquirer Mindanao

ILIGAN—THE CONTROVERSY THAT Mayor Nasser Pangandaman Jr. of Masiu, Lanao del Sur finds himself in due to his involvement in a golf course brawl in Antipolo City betrays the perceived "sober image" of his family.

Before the brawl, the name Pangandaman was associated with a Cabinet member or with a diplomat named governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The Pangandamans have Music in

PANGANDAMANS A9

'Juan' finds life after HIV in 'Each One'

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

HAVING FAILED TO PASS THE MEDical tests for a new job in Saudi Arabia, Juan (not his real name) came home last March to confront a painful truth: He is positive for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

His heart was crushed, his faith shattered. He thought it was the end of his

JUAN A8

THE OLD BLOOMS LIKE A NEW YEAR The strawberry vendor in Trinidad, Benguet, may be as old as the year that was but with the fruits of her labor at hand, she boasts like the bloom of youth and the freshness of a crisp new year. LYNETTE LOUISE MONTEVERDE/INQUIRER

Who are you? Mormons have the answer

By Kristine L. Alave

WHO AM I? WHERE DID I come from?

People plagued by these questions can find the answers at the Family Search archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, which has copies of all civil registries in the Philippines dating to the 16th century.

The records, which are free and open to the public, have helped orphans wanting to trace their birth parents, people looking for blood kin for medical reasons, and historians researching their books.

It has helped people to know and understand their roots, according to the Family Search archivists.

Knowing that one's ancestor was a hero could be a source of inspiration, they said. Or if he was a cad or a criminal, then one could learn from his mistakes and strive to do better, they added.

"You cannot change history. You can hide it, but the fact is, it's there," said Manny Abad, country manager of the Pasig

MORMONS A9

2009 is the year of the carabao

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE TIRELESS AND GENTLE ox or water buffalo is likely to bring good luck through the new year for sugarcane farmers in Negros Occidental and a couple of aspiring presidential candidates—Joseph Estrada and Manny Villar.

But the Year of the Earth Ox portends "headaches and heartaches" for President Maria Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who was born in the Year of the Pig, according to Dr. Andy Tan, a feng shui consultant.

The sign of opulence through hard work and diligence, the Year of the Ox will be marked by a slow but certain progress in the economy and in the lives of the average hard-working Fil-

OXEN A9

Israel rules out temporary ceasefire

JERUSALEM—ISRAEL RULED out a temporary truce in Gaza on Wednesday, saying it would only mull a permanent ceasefire as jets pounded Hamas targets for a fifth day and the Islamists pummeled Israel with rockets.

Protests mushroomed around the globe and the world's top diplomats scrambled to find a way to stop one of Israel's deadliest-ever offensives on Gaza that has so far killed at least 390 Palestinians.

As the Israeli security Cabinet convened in Tel Aviv to consider international proposals of a truce, a senior government official told AFP the Jewish state would not agree to a French offer of a 48-hour lull.

ISRAEL A9

Farmers recall gentler, kinder Mike A

By Alcain Papa

FARMERS OF HACIENDA BAcon in Negros Occidental, owned by the family of Jose Miguel Arroyo, remember the good old days of relative calm in the hacienda. Those were in the 1980s.

To the farmers, the First Gentleman was a swell guy who talked to them about ag repairs, hugged their elderly and kissed cute their children.

When a family needed a little

FARMERS A8

Ma's worry begets 'Rice Prince' book

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

HER WORRY ABOUT HOW her son takes the rise on his plans for granted led this young mother to come up with a creative way to show children the importance of rice.

Like many other mothers, Chat Garrido-Ocampo, mother to 4-year-old Anthony Manuel and 3-year-old Alvin Carlos, was frustrated at how her eldest son would waste rice or-

RICE A9

WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY Cloudy to partly cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers while Visayas and Mindanao will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. Eastern Visayas and Northern Mindanao

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Cotabato	Cloudy with Rain
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rain
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rain
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rain
Dagupan	Partly Cloudy	San Jose	Cloudy with Rain
Naga	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo	Cloudy with Rain
Legazpi	Rain	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rain
Palawan	Cloudy with Rain	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rain

Second FRONTPAGE
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GMA's wish for New Year: Stability

'Have more compassion, share blessings'

By Dona Pazzibugan

IF ALL FILIPINOS, WHETHER RICH OR poor, would only practice the bayanihan spirit, the nation would be better able to cope with the global economic crisis, said Manila Archbishop Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales.

In his New Year's Day message, Rosales called for greater compassion and sharing among Filipinos as the country braces for the severe effects of the economic crisis next year.

"There is the possibility, they say, that the world's current financial and economic crisis may affect the country by next mid-year. Please God it may not happen," the Cardinal said.

"But if it does, there is an emergency situation, more than economic justice will be needed to insure peace. Compassion and the spirit of sharing, of which the Filipinos are noted to have much, will make life at least bearable for both the poor and the rich," he said.

He said other Filipino traits, like simplicity, frugality and the bayanihan spirit will ensure that the country would weather the crisis.

Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz, in his own message, cited the example of the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary and Joseph—to inspire Filipinos in facing the crisis.

"As the Holy Family was able to survive despite its poverty...we too have to keep in mind the wise saying: 'God helps those who help themselves,'" Cruz said.

He urged Filipinos to practice solidarity, productivity and patriotism.

"This simply means that we have to sweat even by doing little income-generating work...Those must be entrepreneurial yet we can and should do even in our little backyards. Like planting vegetables, tomatoes and the like.

Furthermore, we do not spend unless really needed, we do not buy what is not necessary," he said.

Rosales said reborn can start with the "disciplined and prudent" use of firecrackers and pyrotechnic displays to welcome the New Year.

By TJ Burgonio and Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

AFTER SURVIVING A TUMULTUOUS 2008, President Macapagal-Arroyo said her wish for the New Year was for more stability as the countdown to her remaining 18 months in office begins today.

And to cushion the blow of the world-wide recession, she is prepared to make tough if unpopular decisions, and will let "battery judge her," according to Cabinet officials.

"The year runs us unanimous for the world due to the global economic recession that, thankfully, has not become a crisis in the Philippines," Ms Arroyo said in a brief New Year's message. (She said she was wishing for "peace, progress and prosperity for the people of the nation.")

2008 had been a rocky year for the Arroyo government for facing a fresh impeachment complaint that was eventually junked by the administration-dominated House of Representatives, protests over Charter change and a flurry of scandals.

But having survived all these, the administration looked back to 2009 as a "well-lived year," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said. "While there have been some tense, stressful and challenging moments, they only proved the Filipino people's capacity to face challenges," he said in his New Year's message.

Secretary Gabriel Claudio, presidential political adviser, said the administration viewed the controversies as "tests." In a text message to the Inquirer, he said: "The experiences of 2008, whether in pain or in triumph, have given the administration greater wisdom, discipline and fortitude to face the challenges ahead with hope and optimism."

Some observers noted that Ms Arroyo would finish her term until June 30, 2010, but would become a lame-duck President (the year when the 2010 campaign for the Presidency kicks off.

Political analyst Moo Casiple disagreed. "She will become a lame-duck if Charter change does not prosper. The Charter says her terms ends on June 30, 2010. If that is not changed,...everyone will regard her as a lame-duck President. Everyone, including her allies, will desert her," he said in a phone interview.

The administration is expected to go "Full Time" in its drive to rewrite the 1987 Charter this year through a consistent assault on and research over the rest of Mindanao, the rest of Visayas, Southern Luzon and the eastern section of Central Luzon.

The rest of the country will continue to experience good weather, except for some "isolated passing rains," Pagasa said.

"The forecast is that the low pressure area will be around for the next few days," Pagasa weather forecaster Sonny Alejo said.

The low-pressure area was spotted 190 kilometers southeast of Guiuan, Eastern Samar.

A low-pressure area is a region where the atmospheric pressure is lower than the surrounding area. As the air rises, it cools to form clouds and rain.

Temperatures in Metro Manila will range from 23 degrees to 30 degrees Celsius.

Moderate to strong northeasterly winds (amihan) will continue to blow over Luzon and the Visayas.

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Rains spoil Dec. 31 fests

By Alvin Pupa

CLOUDY SKIES AND LIGHT rains may well have put a damper on the New Year firecracker revelry last night.

Light intermittent showers hindered Metro Manila from resuming to late afternoon yesterday, just hours before the end of the last day of the year.

In a weather bulletin issued yesterday, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said the rains were caused by a low pressure area that could develop into a tropical cyclone in the next few days.

According to the weather bulletin, which covers the period Dec. 29, 2008 to Jan. 1, 2009, the low-pressure area will affect Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. It will bring frequent rains in Northern Mindanao and the Eastern Visayas beginning today (Jan. 1), and is expected to extend Ms Arroyo's stay in power, Casiple said.

After keeping the economy "afloat" in 2008, the government said it would put more money in social welfare, food productivity, poverty alleviation, health, and education and infrastructure development, among others, this year.

In her message, Ms Arroyo said she hoped all countries would "work together as a global community" to weather the global economic storm.

"Here at home, I hope that the efforts we are making to eliminate poverty and improve the lives of our people will continue to bear fruits and that these efforts will pave the way to the creation of a more prosperous Philippines," she said.

Finally, for his part, said the administration would not allow the domestic economy to "defend" and the poor to deal on their own with the adverse impact of the recession "that is being underplayed now: you."

"It has always been, whether she is linked to her popular decisions or criticized for the tough choices she makes, these hardly matter to President Arroyo who will always put premium on the bigger scheme of things...the integrity of the public policy decisions at her level that would indeed make a difference in the lives of our people," he said.

"The President will do what she must in accordance with her agenda of governance, and she would prefer to have history judge her Presidency," he added.

In Baguio City (where the Arroyos are spending the holidays, the ceremonial relighting of the country's summer capital starts today.

The President marked New Year's Eve by giving gifts to some 3,000 residents rallied from the city's depressed communities.

It was a security nightmare for the Presidential security Group which had to think people who entered Mansion House, the official Presidential summer retreat, before they were led to rooms offering free medical services.

In Legazpi City—Albay's, city tourism office, said the city government wanted to greet the centennial "with a real bang."

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Kapag nasimulan ang bagong taon nang sama-sama at naka-smile ang pamilya, buong taon tayong masaya.

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Peace talks with rebels okay, only if...

By TJ Burgonio

THE GOVERNMENT HAS EXpressed its readiness to resume peace talks this month with Islamic secessionist rebels in Mindanao, but insisted that any new agreements would stay within the limits set by the Constitution.

In his New Year message, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the government would always be guided by the Constitution when talking peace with either separatist Islamic rebels or communist guerrillas.

President Macapagal-Arroyo reconstituted the government's peace panel in December, four months after the Supreme Court dismissed as "unconstitutional" an earlier agreement granting the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) an expanded autonomous homeland.

"The peace process, as always, has been guided by consensus-based legal parameters that guarantee sovereignty, territorial integrity and justice and fairness for each Filipino," Ermita said in his message.

He added that the government "has always been serious" in pursuing peace with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the New People's Army. But he stressed that it would not "run for peace at any price."

The earlier deal with the MILF — expanding the Bangsamoro territory in the hopes of ending the decades-old Moro insurgency was brokered by Malaysia and backed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The memorandum of agreement had already been initialed by both sides but the high court stopped the signing of the agreement last Aug. 5 in Kuala Lumpur.

The court backtracked on a petition by non-Muslim Mindanao leaders who were upset that they had not been consulted about the reconfiguring of some provinces.

FOR GOOD LUCK

Filipino-Chinese youths perform the Lion Dance in front of a shop in Binondo, Manila. It's a ritual performed not only during Chinese New Year, they said, but also on other special occasions and festivals like today

Justice department affirms $86.7M DepEd-USAID deal

By Norman Bordadora

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE has upheld the validity of an $86.7-million assistance deal entered into by the Department of Education and the US Agency for International Development.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus sought the DOJ opinion on the validity of the program that would run from 2008 to 2013 as part of the requirements of the agreement.

The grant assistance of $86.7 million will be used to provide technical assistance to improve basic education in the country.

"After a review of the documents submitted to this department, more particularly the special authority signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo, there is sure no iota of doubt that the DepEd, through the secretary, has been authorized to enter into the (agreement)," said Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

No doubts

Gonzalez said the presidential initiative is clear in authorizing the education secretary "to conclude and sign in accordance with law, for and on behalf of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, the subject assistance agreement with the USAID."

The DOJ opinion said it found no legal or constitutional obstacle to the agreement. "Neither do we doubt its binding effect upon the DepEd as a legal obligation arising out of the terms of the said agreement," he added.

The DOJ opinion paves the way for the start of the program which will run from 2008 to 2013.

In a related development, the DOJ upheld the authority of the Commission on Higher Education (Ched) over universities and colleges established by local government units.

Power

"It rightfully claimed, the power of the LGUs is limited to the creation and operation of vocational and technical schools and similar post-secondary institutions, subject to the approval of the (Ched)," Gonzalez said in the DOJ opinion.

"While the (the law) does not prohibit LGUs from establishing higher education institutions, the same can only be done with the approval of the Ched and subject to the provisions of the R.A. No. 7722 (the law that created the commission)," he added.

Ched is the governing body that oversees both public and private higher education institutions in the Philippines. It sets curriculum standards and monitors compliance by colleges and universities nationwide.

FISHING IN A GOLF COURSE? These men don't think it's such a ridiculous. In fact, they caught some "tilapia" fish in the water trap of the Intramuros golf course in Manila.

Charter change biggest issue of critics vs GMA, even in '09

By Christian V. Esguerra and Michael Lim Ubac

NEW YEAR, OLD FOES.

Critics of President Macapagal-Arroyo reportedly vowed to inspire for her in the new year and in the homestretch of her nine-year term. She has been in Malacañang since 2001.

"There is nothing Mr Arroyo will be able to do in the last few months of her reign of terror that will improve what people think of her," said Leah Navarro, co-convenor of the civil society group Black and White Movement.

Despite four failed attempts to impeach Ms Arroyo, Navarro said her group would continue to "work tirelessly to that direction" if only to make her accountable for unresolved allegations such as the "Hello Garci" controversy.

Navarro said her group would also continue to block Ms Arroyo's efforts to keep Mr Arroyo in office beyond 2010, a lingering suspicion considering moves in the House of Representatives to amend the Constitution.

The move of Malacañang allies to spearhead Charter change (Cha-cha) one hour-like Hugpong-led political opposition to forge a unified front against Cha-cha to ensure that the presidential election in 2010 will take place.

The elusive unity within the opposition was pointed out by Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano and Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. in separate interviews before the ceremony ushered in New Year's Day.

Cayetano said that Cha-cha remained the biggest issue confronting critics of Ms Arroyo in 2009.

Common platform

This will provide a common platform for the roaring members of the Senate to unite against a "runaway convoy," he said.

The opposition has several presidential aspirants but Cayetano said "the big hindrance—what is stopping them from coming together—is choosing standard- in the possibility of Cha-cha, and the possibility of the President staying on to whatever capacity after 2010."

He said those in the administration had already made "commitments" to their presidential candidates, mostly in the opposition, "subject to the fact that it won't be a question of choosing between President Arroyo and the next candidate."

"In short, any political commitment binges on there being elections in 2016," he said.

In Sa, only Sen. Manuel Villar has declared that he would run for president, while Senators Loren Legarda, Mar Roxas, Francis Escudero, Pedro Lacson and Richard Gordon are keeping coy about their presidential ambitions.

While there will be individual announcements and party accruitment, there is no indigenous taking place "until the certainty of the 2010 election."

The prospect of no elections is scary for both the opposition and the citizens, he said, adding that the first quarter of the year would be "crucial" because of Cha-cha.

The House initially decided to go it alone—proceed with Charter amendments without the Senate—but later declared a ceasefire during the holidays following a large rally spearheaded by the Catholic Church and the opposition in Makati City.

Joint voting

The Senate has been adamant that any Cha-cha resolution should be decided by both chambers, voting separately, while the much larger House favors a joint voting. The House will start floor debates on Cha-cha resolution when Congress resumes session on Jan. 19.

Quoting the "Art of War," Pimentel said: "Under the Sun Tzu principle of the enemy of your enemy is your friend, they might engage in a unified effort to move off a brazenly unconstitutional act."

By "they," he was alluding to presidential aspirants in the Senate.

Pacquiaos welcome Queen Liz to fold

GENERAL SANTOS CITY— Weeks after her son, boxing champ Manny Pacquiao, "lent" their first House, Dionisia Pacquiao had another reason to celebrate.

Her daughter-in-law, Jinkee, gave birth to a baby girl on Sunday morning (Monday night, Manila time) at the Los Angeles Memorial Hospital. The baby weighed 7 lbs 9 ounces.

Dionisia said Manny advised his newborn's kitchen and even cut the baby's umbilical cord.

"I want to see my new grandchild. I wish that they can all come home so I can hug and kiss my grandchild," she said from Pilipinas.

In earlier interviews, the boxing champ said he wanted to name his new daughter Queen Elizabeth, the first daughter is nicknamed Princess, although her name is Mary Divine Grace.

Dionisia said she would be happy if Manny and Jinkee were to have a dozen children. With the newest baby, the couple now have four children: two boys and two girls.

"I told them to have at least a dozen children because they can afford to. The more, the merrier," she said.

But Dionisia, known for being a religious person, said that family planning should be practiced by parents who do not have the means to bring up a lot of children.

"It's okay to have a lot of kids if their parents can afford to raise them and send them to school. If my husband and I had practiced birth control, there would be no Manny Pacquiao," she said with a laugh. *Aquiles Zonio, Inquirer Mindanao*

Sharp drop in orders for electronics raw materials, says NSO

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE COUNTRY'S IMPORTS OF electronic raw materials fell by double digits in October from a year ago amid fears of a deepening global recession in 2009.

This indicates a bleak outlook regarding consumer demand for electronic products, the country's biggest export earner.

The National Statistics Office reported recently that imports in October amounted to $4.08 billion, down by 11.1 percent from $5.31 billion in the same month last year, mainly due to a big drop in orders for electronic raw materials.

Of this total, electronic imports contracted 20 percent to $1.63 billion from $2.32 billion. Imported electronic are mostly raw materials assembled in the Philippines into intermediate goods for export to the United States and other countries. The goods are then made into consumer electronic products, such as cellular phones, and personal computers.

Imports in general, however, continued to rise. The NSO reported that from January to October, overall imports registered a 9.6-percent growth amounting to $49.86 billion, compared to $45.47 billion in the same period last year.

It was earlier reported that the country's exports for the first 10 months stood at $42.84 billion, up by only 1.9 percent from $42.02 billion in the same period last year.

Thus, the Philippines posted a trade deficit of $7.02 billion in January to October this year, or more than double the $3.45 billion registered in January to October last year.

The balance of trade is the difference between earnings from exports and expenditures for imports.

Although imported electronics dropped sharply in October, it was still the country's biggest import product category.

Electronics accounted for 39.6 percent of the country's total import bill for October.

Other imports include mineral fuels and lubricants amounting to $983.53 million, down by 3 percent from $993.76 million in October last year.

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PDEA Director General Dionisio Santiago presents a suspected Japanese drug courier to the media in this file photo taken last September. EDWIN BACASMAS

PDEA ready to tell all

Point page A1

Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan has agreed to lead a Senate probe of the alleged bribe.

Major Marcelino

Santiago said the PDEA would present Major Ferdinand Marcelino, head of the agency's Special Enforcement Service that led the Sept. 29 operations to Amazon Center in Quezon City and Ayala Alabang, Muntinlupa.

Some 60 tablets of Ecstasy, packs of marijuana, and several sachets of cocaine were found when the three suspects were arrested in buy-bust operations four hours apart three months ago.

Since their arrest, the young men have been detained at the 50-square meter custodial center of PDEA's 3000th Manila Regional Office in Quezon City, getting daily visits from relatives, consultants and officials earlier said the Inquirer.

Bribe cries

Minutes later, reliable Santiago described as an "incorrigible" operative, earlier disclosed three bribe tries for the trio's release. The combat-tested former Marine officer said offers of P5 million to P20 million were made to him by parties related to the suspects.

Santiago said the PDEA was serving text messages, including one that reportedly piqued him, that "reliable sources" had sent the agency about the bribe offers.

"There was a message about no having received part of the money. The text also sent a text to every officers that I received that. The only question is where the money went. It means that there was an exchange of cash," said Santiago, who has denied receiving a cent from the alleged bribe money.

"We're very confident about this because the two messages are coming," he said.

Zuño denial

The PDEA last week said that it received information about the P50 million bribe to stop prosecutors that resulted in the dismissal of the case against the suspects.

Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño has denied that he and the prosecutors who investigated and endorsed the case had been bribed into exonerating the dismissal of charges.

The PDEA said the Inquirer story of Justice dismissed drug charges against the suspects on Dec. 2 for "lack of probable cause," a decision the agency decried citing solid evidence gathered during the buy-busts. The Dec. 2 resolution, with findings by state prosecutors Philip Quiroga and Miguel Lucila-ga, was approved by Zuño.

Up for review

The case will be up for review after the holidays as orders of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, the agency said.

Santiago also maintained PDEA's obligation to hold the suspects despite the recommendation to dismiss the case, citing a DOJ memorandum keeping drug suspects under the agency's custody until the final resolution of the charges.

Under the DOJ Memorandum Circular No. 55, the PDEA may commit detainees to city jails if there are no cells or elevated in a court for trial.

Santiago said the memorandum was clear that the suspects could not be transferred until the resolution on the case became final and executory, which means that it has been signed by the justice secretary.

"The reason we are still holding (the suspects) is because of the memorandum," he said.

Santiago expressed the hope that the Senate probe would lead to the review of the country's anti-drug law in order to strengthen coordination between the PDEA and the DOJ.

Farmers launch online campaign to oust DAR chief

By Nikko Dizon

FARMERS FIGHTING FOR their piece of land in a sprawling hacienda in Laguna will have a crash course on the Internet today at the launch of an online campaign for the resignation of Agrarian Secretary Nasser Pangandaman and a revamp of his department's bureaucracy.

The online campaign was inspired partly by the tensions stirred by the blog of Hilario Oled "Hamletao" Dela Paz, who wrote about how Pangandaman's sons allegedly beat up her father and managed to bribe following an argument on a golf course, Jose Rodriguez, executive director of the Peace Foundation, said yesterday.

"I received a lot of e-mail from a lot of e-groups condemning the incident. Dozens people-signs but don't hit a 14-year-old boy... As DAR [Department of Agrarian Reform] secretary, he has not done anything for the farmers but instead focused [conversions of land into] golf courses," Rodriguez said on the phone.

How to use Internet

Peace Foundation has been supporting the cause of 400 farmers at the Hacienda Isla in Calamba, Laguna, and Rodriguez was tasked to ensure a website calling for Pangandaman's resignation.

When she meets the farmers today Rodriguez will have with her a laptop with a wireless Internet modem.

On a roadside outside the DAR main office in Diliman, Quezon City, she will teach the farmers how to navigate the Internet and sign their names on the website to call for Pangandaman's resignation.

"The online campaign is one tool for Pangandaman's resignation but also to defend Ang [Congresbreaker Representative Satur Ocampo] and [still] for a revamp of the DAR bureaucracy. He wants to defend, reward, and reform Ang," Rodriguez said.

Missing: Protester secretary

The programmers of the Department assign customers say they do not have anyone specific to embrace as the secretary's replacement, but they want someone who will be "pro-farmer."

"The position is a political appointment. We need someone who will promote the issues and the interest of farmers. That's what has been missing," Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez said the Peace Foundation and the farmers' group UNDRIA (Pambansang Ugnayan ng mga Nagsasariling Lokal na Organisasyon sa Kanayunan)—which are spearheading the campaign—hoped to "gather as many friends" as possible at today's launch, although they knew most people would be busy with their New Year celebrations.

"We'll give it one hell effort," Rodriguez said.

Running priest

The launch will be kicked off by a Mass at 11 a.m. to be officiated by Fr. Robert Reyes, the "running priest."

Reyes said that Pangandaman should resign not only for the golf course incident but also "for all his failures as DAR Secretary."

"We will be coming out with a long list of his failures," Reyes told the Inquirer.

He said he wanted to invite the Dela Paz family to attend the Mass.

Yain's land

Reyes and Rodriguez joined a farmers' march yesterday morning from Cuabbang to Calamba as part of a separate campaign to urge DAR to void a repacted order exempting 3,250 hectares of Hacienda Palico 3, 7,100 hectares from coverage of the CARP.

The agrarian reform law explained yesterday but Congress has passed a resolution extending it for another six months but without any completion for landowners to give up their lands.

Under Pangandaman, Reyes said DAR became the "Department of Agriculture Revision".

"It's because the secretary was known to reverse decisions," Reyes said.

Turned into golf courses

GINOOBA spokesperson Vangie Mendoza said the original Hacienda Yain included lands in the Laguna towns of Cuabbang, Calamba, Biñan, Santa Cabuyao, and Silang.

"All 7,140 hectares used to be an awesome [sugar mill]," Mendoza said.

Some of it that fell under Carp were converted into three golf courses in recent years, she said.

More than 1,000 farmers are petitioning to own lands in Gate-2B lower areas of the hacienda in Cuabbang, Cabuyao, and Sta. Rosa.

Mendoza said that in 2000, a total of 254 hectares of Hacienda Palo were awarded to 59 farmers following a Supreme Court decision.

"The fight for that piece of land began in the 1970s," Mendoza said.

Bloggers whip up storm over Valley brawl

By DJ Yap, Metro
and Cedell P. Rapsa, Sports

BLOGGER POWER CONTINUES to fire up the online journal of Bamboo Dela Paz days after she first posted her story about the brawl between her family and the sons of Agrarian Secretary Nasser Pangandaman at the Valley Golf and Country Club.

More late last past on his blog "Hamletao" on Dec. 27, hundreds more of reader comments have streamed in, as blogger after blogger sought to spread her story around the web, seemingly unaware that the incident is merely routine in every corner of the globe where there are Filipinos.

As of yesterday afternoon, more than 700 had commented on her original blog entry. "The world has gone crazy," in it, she recounted in vivid detail the alleged beating of her father, Hilquod owner Emilio Dela Paz, and her 14-year-old brother by Pangandaman's two sons and supposed bodyguards.

An additional 1,09 comments were also made in her succeeding entry, "Updates and Thank yous," in which Bamboo posted links to some news sites and expressed her gratitude for the huge online support.

The reader remarks ranged from the angry and belligerent, to the sympathetic and comforting. Many believed the blog should exist since to be circulated to reach more people and to file public writings.

Apology not enough

Dalmerosqui said: "I'll help spread this blog around. This is the least that I can do."

Ashis, who said he was a Malaysian based in the Philippines, lamented the "injustice" he thought Bamboo had suffered.

Most passed a flak at the to-spoon story about the Dela Paces' refusal to accept Pangandaman's public apology.

"Apology not enough.

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Who are you? Mormons have the answer

From page A1

ly branch archives.

The Family Search database is also useful for people who want to know their family's medical history, particularly those at risk for diseases that are passed down through the generations, he said.

If one of your ancestors died of diabetes, then you know that you belong to a high-risk group and therefore, must be careful with your diet, he said.

Reid also he believes that conflicts would be reduced if people only took the time to check out their family histories.

They would realize that they and the people they are in conflict with have more affinities than differences, he said.

"You realize that your enemy is just like you. You become open-hearted," he said.

Pete Addams, the Quezon City chapter president of the church, said he has always wondered about his surname. He said his family is from the north and yet his last name sounds Arabic, which would make one suppose that he is from Muslim descent.

When Addams searched the records, he discovered that his ancestors originally came from Syria, traveled to India and settled in the Bicos region, while still keeping their Arabic name.

This is why, Addams said, when he first went to Davao he felt an affinity for the Muslims because he believes deep in he descended from the Arabs.

Editor's Note: Islam was brought to Sulu and Mindanao through Muslim missionaries who came from Arabia between the 14th and 15th centuries and converted the people of Southeast Asia. The Muslims of Mindanao are not descended from the Arabs. They are descended, the same as their brother Filipinos everywhere.

Family is central

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, also known as the Mormons, is the fourth largest Christian denomination in the United States, headquartered in Salt Lake City. It is also the largest denomination originating from the Latter Day Saint movement founded by Joseph Smith on April 6, 1830.

Family life is central to Mormon belief because it is thought that the family unit will continue to exist beyond mortal life. To the Mormons, the lives of their dead relatives are part of their own lives and therefore, hence the intense interest in genealogy.

Jacob Fernandez, assistant director for public affairs, said finding one's roots and respecting the departed is a fundamental tenet of the church, one that even non-church members are familiar with.

"Families can be together forever. Family relationships last forever. We perform ordinances—ordinances—for them to be able to be with them in the next life," he said.

ROOTS Look up your family tree at the main temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints in Greenmeadows, Quezon City. EDWARD DY/INQ

"The church is a family-centered church. Everything we do boils down to that," he said.

Surprise larks

Reid said a surprise, pleasant to otherwise, about always larks to one's family tree and records.

Take Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte who, according to Fernandez, has been unwittingly celebrating his birthday on the wrong date.

Instead of Oct. 2, Belmonte's birth date is actually Oct. 1, said Basil. Church researchers discovered it in his birth records.

Belmonte also learned that his family was originally from the Ilocos region and not Nueva Ecija, where he was born, and that his surname was not originally spelled with a "B."

"They probably migrated to Nueva Ecija," said Basil.

Belmonte took the news of his supposedly sad birth date in stride.

"He was really surprised. But it was there on the records," Basil said.

The mayor said, "If I know who my ancestors are, then I know more about myself."

FVR, FM distant cousins

The Family Search archives also determined the exact relationship between former President Fidel V. Ramos and the late dictators Ferdinand Marcos.

According to Basil, the two men had the same great-great grandfather and therefore, are distant cousins.

The archivists also used tracing former President Corazon Aquino's family tree.

Basil said their search showed that Cojuangcos—Aquino's maiden name—was the name of the family patriarch who came from China to the Philippines.

"His name was Co Juan Co. It was shortened into one name," Basil said.

They tried mapping the Aquino branch of the family but it was too dense, said Basil.

"It has too many branches. It's like the name De la Cruz," he said.

The Mormon archivists offered to map the family tree of Presidents Joseph Estrada and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, but they both declined the offer, Basil said.

Since 1500s

So far, Mormon archivists have copied 98 percent of the country's civil registries and 80 percent of the Catholic Church records—containing baptismal, confirmation, among others—since the archives' work started in 1972.

Fernandez said the group has volunteers, armed with cameras, who scour dusty record rooms of all municipalities in the country and photograph the documents. The volunteers who do the dirty work are trained to read Spanish and the once-lovesome handwriting.

Oldest document

The microfilms are stored in The Church of Latter-Day Saints' main temple in Greenmeadows, Quezon City. Basil said there are 60,000 microfilms stored in their vaults.

The oldest document was a baptismal record signed in 1542, just two decades after Ferdinand Magellan landed in the Philippines, which was found in a Batangas municipality of Batangas.

'Juan' finds life after HIV in 'Each One'

From page A1

dreams. He thought his life was ended at 24.

He found out that he was wrong.

"There is life after what happened," said Juan who has found new purpose as a member of the suicidal chapter of the Edsamang Galing sa Puso's Inang Pamumuhay (EGPP), one of the Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations (Tayo) for 2008.

The EGPP was cited for its project to promote awareness about the disease as well as provide a support group for its 18 members living with HIV, including Juan.

Support group

"It is very important to have a support group because you can talk to them and express what you feel, what you think about and then you can receive talk from them," Juan said.

He is now one of the group's most active members, speaking in various forums to spread awareness about the disease and correct misconceptions about it.

It was also Juan who proposed the EGPP project during the national judging for the Tayo awards.

"I am here to listen [of you] with the firm conviction that even an HIV positive individual can do something to bring a positive change in the lives of others," he said in his presentation.

The project, named "Each One, Reach One, Teach One: Leadership for Young People Living with and Affected by HIV," a three-pronged scheme children about their rights and risks; reach out to HIV carriers through hospital and home visits with counseling and medical support; and educate HIV carriers to "better understand and cope with the stigma and discrimination."

They live normal lives

In an e-mail message, EGPP president and founder John Hermes Montilla stressed that people with HIV should not be labelled "victims" nor should they be described as "suffering from HIV."

"They do not suffer. They still live normal lives," said Montilla.

It was not an easy process for him, said Juan. He did not know who to talk with and what to say. Could he ever get a job again? Could he have other people?

"I felt hopeless. I felt like my life would be going to waste," said Juan, who contracted the disease from a partner.

Though he considered himself because in having a supportive family, he knew his parents were also in pain. "They did not say so, but I know they were hurting."

Since its establishment in December 2006, the EGPP in Bacolod City has established links with government and private agencies, as well as with the Gonzaga Lords Montefilous Memorial Regional Hospital where Juan went positive for HIV. The hospital endorsed his case to the EGPP.

"I was apprehensive at first. I did not know who they were. I did not know how they would think about me," Juan said.

His fears proved wrong after a few meetings with the group.

"I felt I was in a good group," he said. He found himself growing more involved in the EGPP and regaining his self-respect in the process.

"I found the courage to face students during symposiums, one thing that I never thought I could do again," he said.

Don't hide

Juan worked as a teacher in South Korea for two years. He transferred to Saudi Arabia to work as an accountant. It was there that he failed the medical tests and discovered that he was infected with HIV.

"I came to encourage other people [with HIV] not to hide. I want them to see my example," Juan said.

"I have accepted what happened. Life must go on. Just do what good things you can still do," he added.

The project, which the EGPP also presented at the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City last August, has brought together not only people with HIV in Western Visayas, but also their children and family members.

Juan said that many members with HIV are women: mothers like him. Some are wives of overseas workers.

"I empathize with them [the wives]. Their acceptance is slow. They ask themselves, why did this happen when they have been faithful," Juan said.

Families of people with HIV also need support as they are also victims of discrimination once neighbors know that a relative is infected.

Come out

The group is also able to help with their family medication for its members with HIV through the grants it receives from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Philippine National AIDS Council.

Juan said the EGPP can also help people who suspect they may have acquired the virus to take the test.

Echoing the warnings from international agencies, he said the actual number of people with HIV in the Philippines could be much higher than is reported largely because of the fear of being discriminated against that drives carriers from coming out.

The Department of Health says there are 8,488 people with HIV in the country.

The EGPP chapter in Bacolod City is one of the five chapters of the parent organization established in Iloilo City in 1998, which started out as a group to rescue and protect sexually exploited children. It won a Tayo award in 2003.

Recognition

Tayo started giving recognition to what it considers as the excellent projects of youth organizations in 2003. It is open to all groups whose members and leaders are 15 to 34 years old. More than 60 groups joined the competition this year.

The following groups also won the Tayo award for 2008: Dynamic Teen Company, Cebu City; Society of Scholars and Gramers, Benguet State University; UP Cebu SIKALOG Improvement Club, UP High School Cebu; Youth Advocates Through Science Ara., Dagupan City; MSU Iligan Students for Emergencies;

Assistance and Management Inc., Kidapawan, North Cotabato; Landfree 4-H Club, Jamapan, School of Business and Management Student Council, Xavier University; Asociacion de Capayan, Cagayan de Oro City; Jose Rizal University Computer Society Mandaluyong City; and Mu Sigma Phi Fraternity, El Salvador.

The 10 organizations received their awards last Dec. 16 and each got a P50,000 cash grant for their projects.

Risky behaviors

Montilla said his group also supports the reproductive health bill pending in Congress which promotes sex education and the use of artificial contraception.

"Young people engage in risky behaviors not because of the reproductive health bill or sex education measures but because they are robbed of their rights to have access to [correct] information about sex, sexuality and reproductive health," Montilla said.

The social stigma attached to people with HIV is hard to bear, said Juan.

"There are instances when someone would stay away from me because of my disease," he said while still lamenting that he might be able to build a full-time job again.

But in his prayers, Juan remains grateful: "I am thankful that despite my disease, I feel good about life."

Ma's worry begets book on the 'Rice Prince'

From page A1

ery mixed them.

"That's the answer of my quarrel with Amian, every time he doesn't finish his food, I would explain to him that rice is nutritious, how difficult it is to make rice. I would tell him not to waste rice, but it's always a struggle," Ocampo said in an interview.

In May last year, Ocampo's work as community relations manager of the International Rice Research Institute (Irri) in Los Baños, Laguna, took her away from home for weeks. Missing her son, she found during the 15-hour flight to Rome, Italy.

But her worry for her son incited not an inspiration for a story that had been on her mind lately.

To Rome and back

And so for the entire duration of the flight, Ocampo wrote the story about the "Rice Prince" and his 5-year-old Pipoong who simply refused to eat his rice despite his mother's pleas.

She wrote the first half of the story on the flight to Rome, the other half on the flight back home.

"I already imagined it from the start. The idea is that it's for reading aloud, it's about rice. It's not a story to motivate kids to finish their food," Ocampo says.

Grace's talent

A year later, however, her story remained only basic—she faced the problem of moving it into a book and publishing it.

Then things fell into place.

Ocampo has a talent at work. Grace Dy, then a graduating student of development communications at the Xavier University Ateneo de Cagayan.

After meeting together for weeks, Ocampo accidentally learned that Dy had a talent for illustration.

Ocampo showed Dy her story about the Rice Prince and hoping. Before the end of the day, Dy had finished the illustration.

"I didn't know she could draw. And it was her first illustration. She sketched it within a day," Ocampo says.

HEROSHIS KIDS Author Chit Gonzales-Ocampo and her two sons Anthony Manuel, 4, and Alvin Carlos, 7, who inspired the book about the importance of rice and the hard work that goes into producing every single grain. LEONARD PASCUAL

Ocampo had been looking for a sponsor for her book and eventually came across the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR).

She wrote BAR Director Nicomedes Herrera and listed her story with a synopsis point-out of Dy's illustrations.

She followed up by phone. Weeks later, her efforts paid off.

BAR agreed to include her children's book among the academic papers on agriculture that it planned to publish.

And a year after she scribbled the story on an airplane, Ocampo's "Pupung nais ko nin" was published last July.

Dedicated to her sons

She also got her wish to distribute the book for free to schoolchildren.

In the foreword, she wrote: "May all children know the importance of rice." She dedicated the book to her sons Anthony Manuel and Alvin Carlos.

Ocampo's story over how her son and so many Filipino children take rice for granted is an issue close to her heart. She has been with Irri as community relations manager since 2003.

Before working at Irri, Ocampo-see did only as a single food. Then she began regularly meet with all the people involved in rice issues: officials, farmers and their families, scientists.

In her book, 3-year-old Pipoong refuses to finish his rice despite his mother's pleas.

Tedious process

The "Rice Prince" appears in Pipoong one night to show him the tedious process of processing rice, and turns Pipoong into a rice seed.

Ocampo infused pride in the rice farmer and in the rice grains. ("We will make the farmer proud. We will grow to feed the world.").

She did not stop just at getting her story published. She went over the book to going around public elementary schools in Ligao to explain the importance of rice to schoolchildren.

Ocampo says wanted leftover rice after meals amounts to 10 percent of the annual rice harvest.

"This means that if we only cook and get what we can eat, we may not import rice anymore," she says.

The Philippines is known as the world's top importer of rice. Filipinos recently hit the country's dependence on imports through high prices.

Ocampo says many Filipinos, especially those who live in the cities, do not know how rice is grown, "worst, they do not know how a rice plant looks like."

Story-telling sessions

With fellow Irri employees Lito Flores and Ritchie Vernerie, Ocampo holds storytelling sessions among Grade 2 and Grade 3 students in public elementary schools in Laguna.

Copies of her book are donated to the library.

Ocampo says she hopes to get more copies published and sold to children "so that they may appreciate the value of rice and its role in our economy."

On a personal level, Ocampo says that after she and Anian read the book together for several weeks, her son learned to value the rice on his plate.

"After his after-rice-day Rice Prince (He usually enjoys reading about Rice Prince). Now he finishes his rice," she says.

IN THE KNOW

Prosperity through hard work

THE YEAR OF THE OX IN the Chinese calendar, which officially begins on Jan. 26, 2009, is associated with prosperity achieved through hard work.

This is because people born in the Ox years (1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985 and 1997) generally do not believe in get-rich-quick schemes, according to the Chinese zodiac.

They are said to be hard working, on the point of being workaholics, much like the animal which plows the soil day after day.

Ox people are described as patient, calm, systematic, logical, honest and dependable. It is said that since they have decided to pursue a particular interest or course of action, it is very difficult to dissuade them.

This stubbornness is considered one of the negative traits of Ox people. They also tend to be narrow-minded and prejudiced, tyrannical and proud.

They do not like asking for help, preferring to solve problems on their own. They are also generally not adventurous. Here is the Ox person who takes wild risks or financial gambles.

Ox people are also said to be introverts with few public relations skills, and who value their privacy.

But many Ox people have become celebrities whose lives are always under public scrutiny. These include movie stars George Clooney, Meryl Streep, Demi Moore, Audrey Hepburn, Jack Nicholson, Robert Redford, Warren Beatty and Meg Ryan.

The late semi-divorcee Charlie Chaplin and actor Rod Steiger, producer Walt Disney, Princess Diana, and tennis hotshot Björn Borg. Other Ox people are said to be emotionally compatible with those born in the Year of the Snake, Rooster and Rat. They are least compatible with Goat people.

According to the legend, the Ox was supposed to be the first sign in the 12-year cycle of the Chinese zodiac because it was the fastest of 12 animals that participated in the race. But the clever Rat rode on the back of the Ox and jumped off to head before it could cross the finish line, thus snatching victory from the Ox. —Cyril C. Enverdazo, Inquirer Research

2009 is the year of the carabao

From page A1

ipino, here and abroad. The call is a phone interview.

The Farm Ox, which official-ly holds sway from Jan. 26 to Feb. 13, 2010, also offers terrific opportunities for banking, real estate, construction and particularly agriculture.

Good for agriculture

"This is a good year for agriculture. Sugar prices will go up, which means a good year for the Negros farmers," said Tan, a physician who has been practicing feng shui—the ancient Chinese system of aesthetics believed to utilize the laws of heaven and earth to help improve one's life by receiving positive energy (qi)—for more than 30 years.

Filipino professionals like engineers and architects, especially those employed in the Middle East, as well as information technology workers in Japan's film industry face a rosy 2009, said Tan.

Business persons interesting and risk-seekers will boom as industries in the United States that is a major financial meltdown are eyeing the Philippines for its relatively cheap labor.

Saving grace

"Renaissance will still be the Philippines' saving grace," he said.

"Generally, the new year will be a little bit better for Filipinos compared to 2008. But the recovery will be very slow," according to another feng shui consultant, Francesca Montero.

The quiet ox, however, will stir things up for Mr. Arroyo whose luck will be awaiting to run in the end of the year, Tan has forecast. The pig, the Arroyo's animal sign, is in conflict with the ox.

"A pig [person] is dominant, intense against the ox[s] and is famous for making unexpected decisions. With a winning luck, they will be more overseas than will attack this [year]. Everything will be blamed on her, but there will be gains and unexpected gains."

Tan also predicted that in the last quarter of the reign of the Earth Ox, from December to February 2010, Mrs. Arroyo will encounter betrayal and humiliation.

"There will be double-crossing friends and relatives," he said.

Countering the negatives

But like having two Manny Pacquiao—who seemed to have fumbled a supposedly certainty-bet of the Rat, which was in conflict with the pig, the Horse...the President may be able to counter the negatives when through prayer and hard work, said Tan.

Those born under the sign of the clever rat gent and the nibble will not be so lucky also.

Those born under the sign of the Ox, "silent workers" formula and villas, will likely enjoy an auspicious year politically, he said.

Senator presidential aspirants like Senators Francis Escudero, Manuel Roxas and Richard Gordon are also expected to do well.

The Fat politicians, Senator Loren Legarda and cousin House Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., will not allow themselves to be left behind, Tan said.

"There will be elections and there will be no chances change due to lack of time," he said.

Tips for good luck

As for the conflict in Mindanao, he said the peace talks "will still be left hanging," he said. Just like the quiet Ox, the country will also be silent—less turmoil and commotion disasters, he added.

For entrepreneurs, Filipinos, trading, buy and sell and repair businesses will reap good fortunes, Tan said.

Absentee officials' same tips for ordinary Filipinos wanting to draw good luck this year:

"Between money with your right hand and accept money with your left as that is would stay with you longer," she said.

On New Year's Day chicken must not be served "because good fortune might fly away," she added.

Israel rules out temporary ceasefire

From page A1

"The proposition by the French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner for a unilateral temporary ceasefire is not useful as it is evident that Hamas will not stop firing rockets against Israel," said the official on condition of anonymity.

A foreign ministry spokesperson said that the Jewish state would only consider a permanent halt to its operations, if Hamas stops firing rockets and acquiring arms.

Dialogue

"There is a dialogue... aiming to reach a lasting deal for a permanent ceasefire under certain conditions," the spokesperson said.

"In order for this truce to be realistic, we need guarantees and conditions. Hamas must stop its rocket fire and acquiring arms. These are indispensable conditions if a permanent truce is to be seriously considered," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert late Tuesday discussed with his foreign and defense ministers a French proposal for a 48-hour truce, but his office said the premier had imposed a strict blackout on details of the meeting.

A spokesperson for Ehud Barak said Israel's defense ministry was looking favorably at the proposal but a brief ceasefire has stressed that this would not prevent the Jewish state from preparing for a possible ground offensive.

390 killed

On the ground, Israeli jets continued to hammer Hamas targets throughout Gaza, carrying out more than 35 surface-to-air missiles, targeting government offices, police stations, security facilities and confiscated tunnels, the army said.

Since being launched on Saturday, the Israeli offensive has killed at least 390 people, including 41 children, and wounded more than 1,900 others, according to Gaza officials.

The massive Israeli assault has left many Hamas structures and bases in rubble and has killed several senior officials of the Islamist group.

But it has failed to stop the rocket fire, with militants having more than 20 rockets alone on Wednesday morning, causing damage and light wounds.

Since late Sunday, Hamas' armed wing says five rockets slamming around the Gaza town of Sderot have wounded 18 Israelis, including a woman in critical condition.

Sirens late Tuesday, Hamas' armed wing says five rockets slamming around the Gaza town of Sderot have wounded 18 Israelis, including a woman in critical condition.

"We tell the leaders of the enemy—if you continue with your assault, we will hit with our rockets further than the cities we have hit so far," a masked spokesperson for the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the Hamas armed wing, said in televised comments late on Tuesday.

Since the start of the Israeli offensive, Gaza militants have fired more than 250 rockets into Israel, killing three civilians and one soldier and wounding several dozen people.

Hamas has also threatened to carry out suicide attacks inside Israel for the first time since January 2005.

'Sustainable truce'

As anger over the offensive spiraled in the Muslim world, diplomatic efforts have gathered pace.

US President George W. Bush spoke with Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas to discuss a "sustainable ceasefire."

"They agreed that for any ceasefire to be effective, it must be respected, particularly by Hamas," White House spokesperson Gordon Johndroe told reporters in Crawford, Texas.

The European Union separately called for a "permanent" ceasefire in and around the Gaza Strip, while the Middle East Quartet called for "an immediate ceasefire that would be fully respected."

World leaders have expressed serious concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and dependence on electricity of 1.5 million which Israel has virtually sealed off since Hamas seized power in June 2007.

Israel opened one of its crossings into Gaza again on Wednesday, allowing more than 100 truckloads of goods to pass, the army said. At total of 150 truckloads and 18 ambulances have been delivered since the start of the Gaza humanitarian crisis. AFP

ON EDGE Israeli tanks take position on the northern border with the Gaza Strip on Wednesday. The Israeli Cabinet is due to discuss international proposals of a truce in its deadly offensive on the Hamas-controlled Gaza. AFP

25% of Gaza casualties civilians

JERUSALEM—AT LEAST 25 percent of Palestinians killed during Israel's massive offensive in the Gaza Strip have been civilians, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said on Wednesday.

"A minimum of 25 percent of all those killed are civilians and it may well be far higher," UNRWA spokesperson Christopher Gunness told AFP.

Since the start of the Israeli offensive on Saturday at least 390 Palestinians have been killed and an other 1,900 wounded, according to Gaza medics. At least 41 of those killed have been children, they say. AFP

Farmers recall gentler, kinder Mike A

From page A1

more cash for various fees or bona-fide farmers. Arroyo did not hesitate to dig into his pocket. 57-year-old farmer Rogelio Salvo told the business.

Sometimes Arroyo himself played basketball with them. "He was a good basketball player. And even when we had work, he would call us to for a game," Salvo said.

In those days, he recalled, the fields of the hacienda would be dusty green with sugarcane and the farmers would go about their work in contentment, with acceptance even of their lot in life.

At Christmas, there was some money, as well as a feast for the farmers and gifts of chicken and toys for their children.

Mortal battle

Today, the farmers are locked in what seems to be a mortal battle, pitting them against the landowner they once called "Peter" and "Inetpeng."

Instead of being the holiday spirit, there is rancor in their hearts. All they had wanted for Christmas was the land promised them.

Salva and seven other farmers from Barau and others in Carmen of the Arroyos recently held a hunger strike to urge President Macapagal-Arroyo to make good on what they say is her 2003 promise to redistribute the hacienda as part of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (Carp). To them, ownership of land is a ways to achieve life.

But up to today, the land has not been signed over to them, the farmers say.

The Carp law was supposed to expire yesterday but Congress has passed moderation extending it for another six months, or until June, without however, completing land transfers, many say. Data released by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Angeles spoke of how hard it had been to fight for their land.

"We came here in Manila not knowing what will happen to us," he said.

At night, the farmers had to brave the chill Dreamliner mind while sleeping on the ground with just mats for protection. At day, they had to endure heroes from cars and jeepneys. They subsisted on dishes of rice, instant noodles and crackers.

But they never faltered.

"If we don't do this, then nothing will ever happen to us. We never lost hope. We would rather die for our principles than continue living in a slavery," Angeles said.

Test for Carp

Angeles also sees the significance of their struggle.

"We are doing this not just for us. If the Arroyo lands are never distributed to farmers, then how much more the land of other landowners? If the Arroyo lands are not distributed to the people, then Carp will fail."

After 16 days, the farmers were persuaded by the Roman Catholic Church leaders to end their hunger strike.

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM At Hacienda Roxas in Negros Occidental surrounded by the family of First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, farmers look back to the good old days in the '70s when their landlord was one swell guy who talked to them like equals and was always there to hear their concerns and help out with their needs. TONI NIEVA/INQUIRER

Angeles said their hunger strike, and other actions of other farmers groups, brought into focus the need to extend funding for the Carp.

"There are a lot more farmers who are still waiting and need the land promised to them. The death of Carp is not over," Angeles said.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, January 1, 2009/
Mary, Mother of God

1st Reading:	Num 6:22-27
Responsorial Psalm:	Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8
Gospel:	Lk 2:16-21

The shepherds went hurriedly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. On seeing this they related what they had been told about the child, and all were astonished at hearing the shepherds.

But Mary she treasured all these sayings and reverently pondered over them.

The shepherds then returned giving glory and praise to God for all they had heard and seen, just as the angels had told them.

At the eighth day the circumcision of the baby had to be performed, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Commentary:

As it was with Mary, so begin the New Year with grace, blessings and hope. Like her we receive the same blessings that Yahweh bestowed on his people, Israel, as spoken to Moses. Through Christ we are called God's children. Today, with Mary, let us ponder upon these blessings and learn to treasure them. And like the shepherds, let us give praise to God in glorious and praise for the wondrous things we have heard and seen.

This year, Mary inspires us to live a life full of gratitude, generosity, compassion and hope, so that we may receive revival, with renewal, all the gifts he has given us. There is no doubt that devotion to Mary provides the key both to sanctity and to salvation. There is no better way to set out quickly to holiness, no better way to please God, and no better way to guarantee one's eternal salvation than through true devotion to Mary delivered by ourselves totally. Mary came up the entire Christian life, showing a way of holiness that was the way of life, chosen by Christ himself.

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OPINION

Folly and prophecy

EDITORIAL

A "CELEBRATED" FORTUNE-TELLER HAS JUST forced another media organization with his list of predictions for 2009, and one of the many political predictions is traveling through. The actress Vilma Santos, now governor of the province of Batangas, is sure to win the vice-presidency, the fortune-teller said. This is an outstanding prediction, to put it mildly, because the elections won't take place until 2010.

Who, in his right mind, would include an event in May 2010 in his list of predictions for 2009? Doesn't this seer's crystal ball come with a calendar?

Another thing: the same "psychic" predicted that Chavit Singson will push through in 2009. Apparently this is a different kind of Chavit Singson from the one the Arroyo administration and its allies have in mind; it still allows discretion for national office, including the vice-presidency which Santos is certain (of course) to win.

In truth, it is easy to make "predictions" about the future. If the predictions are couched in convenient, non-committal language. It is when we require the seers and fortune-tellers who crowd the pages and the newscasts to name specific events or specific persons in specific language that the "predictions" become problematic.

At this time last year, nobody could have predicted what turned out to be the biggest stories of 2008: the worst economic downturn in 70 years, the near-landslide election of a black first-term senator to the White House, the return of Joe-Joe Bolante and revived public interest in the four-peso-old fertilizer scam.

This is not to say that some astute observers had not read the signs correctly; there were economists who sensed something deeply wrong with the US economy; political operations who placed their bets on Barack Obama to win big, even before Obama won the first primary in Iowa; lawyers who saw the imminence of Bolante's deportation.

But the scope of the global economic turmoil, the scale of Obama's victory, the transitoriness of the Filipino public's hunger for the latest revelations about the P728-million fertilizer scam—in general these and similar events, even those relatively predictable incidents like Israel's all-out assault on Hamas in the Gaza Strip or the inevitable politicization of the Olympic torch relay, caught the world by surprise.

Would anyone have predicted, in December 2007, that the largest street demonstrations against the Arroyo administration in 2008 would happen in February, as a protest against the ZTE-NBN scandal, instead of in December, as outrage boiled over against Charter change? Did anyone predict that the worst public-relations disaster to hit the Philippine National Police since terrorist bomber Indhar Rahman al-Ghozi slipped out of Camp Crame would strike in 2008, not over another inexplicable escape but because of over-generous allowances for police generals attending a conference in Russia?

If history teaches us anything, it is that the human capacity for folly, for inconsiderate greed, for self-defeating behavior is endless. Who could have predicted that, in the midst of the worst economic turmoil in three generations, would explode another financial scandal, the $50-billion Madoff scam? Who could have predicted that, under a president with real ties to Muslimists (President Macapagal-Arroyo spent part of her growing-up years in Brunei), the Arroyo administration would wreck this decade's hopes for peace with Moro insurgents through an ill-conceived (not to mention unconstitutional) memorandum of agreement?

None of this is to say that we cannot extrapolate this year's trends from last year's events. We can and should expect the global economic slowdown to hurt Philippine business, both big and small; we can expect a general easing in commodity prices; we should expect the administration to try to prolong its grip on power.

But we must also be open to other possibilities. Who knows? The year 2009 may surprise us with great stories of entrepreneurial derring-do or heartwarming examples of profound civic engagement. Our capacity for transcending our limitations is similarly endless. That is why, as a wise man once said, it is difficult to make predictions, especially about the future.

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Shredding calendars

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

NEW 2009 CALENDARS, piled on PRESIDENT Bush's desk, will be tacked up or shredded today. They've come a long way from year 311 B.C. That was the time when Roman senators set Jan. 1 as the new year.

Various customs have evolved since to mark the passing of 311, 688 hrs. President Macapagal-Arroyo won't get a peaceful, more than 7-min. one neighborhood hygge. "Time is the one thing given to everyone in equal measure," Seneca wrote.

People don't giddy New Year's Eve resolutions. Instead Obama's daily gym workout had many as annual vows to restore their endless resolve to exercise more. Modest resolutions, be it to quit smoking or use time better, can be invaluable. "If we could convert one bath in a year, we would soon be perfect men," Thoreau a century wrote.

Social Weather Stations' latest survey shows nine out of ten Filipinos will greet 2009 with hope rather than fear. How are you best done with resilience? "If this is the new year, be thankful we're not getting all the governance we're paying for," Will Rogers once joked.

As the year ends, stories will flood the ancient consult: "Be still." They give thanks in quiet prayer. Many cartoons into the usual noise for rage. As dawn breaks, enhanced distress or emergency rooms are still treating those blinded by fireworks—and stray bullets.

"Be sure no one's party is responsible to diss out the old year. Sydney Harbor, in Australia, stages the world's most dazzling pyrotechnic show. This draws a crowd of up to 1.5 million. Other countries make bonfires of discarded Christmas trees. In San Francisco's financial district, on New Year's Eve, we run onto a blizzard of old calendars thrown out of office windows.

In the Middle Ages, European countries posted a society of Christian feast days while displacing the human formats, barcodes recall. Today, Catholics mark the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

"Many in Islam's most honored woman," the economist points out, that's the only one to have a whole chapter named after her in the Koran. "Christians and Muslims see, in Mary, an affirmation that echoes from the prophetic piety of God that any human being can attain.

Surely, that is reason enough for people of any faith to find resources for human's foremost feminist mother." Die to our fallen nature's "solitary beast," so the poet said.

Hope are the new kids on the media mountain. Some are individual acts and writers, just in newspapers, radio and TV traditionally do. These memories tally the past year's ills: music April's rice shortages; campaigns by Mom Gloria Glorietta Road commissioner Kate, forest Evangelista. Her "team" generals, etc.—"Life can only be understood backwards," Soren Kierkegaard insisted. "But it is best lived forward."

"Crystal bowl" features are a standard of year-end media reports. The 2008 financial tailspin schooled lawyers in economic lore needs. Economist Amartya Sen recommends whether the administration adequately has mixed down the hatchet for the financial turmoil ahead. Forecasts by Bank of the Philippine Islands get intense attention. "At times like these, it is helpful to remember there have always been times like these."

However, "death keeps no calendar" Natural reviews list prominent individuals who passed away. That includes prominent personalities like African singer Miriam Makeba, is the most luckless the 600 who perished when the "Princess of the Stars" floundered. And how many of us will be around when 2009 ends? "Tomorrow is found only in the calendar of fools," the old saying goes.

Shouldn't media do also a year-end listing of "unfinished business." This is, after all, a country of love classics. We stuffed on the Japanese collaboration issue, then were punished for wasted love and time. Look at Iraq.

Among the issues that 2008 will leave unresolved are: still-missing disappearances; unresolved murders, such as that of #1, Francisco Medina, SJO, and publicist Bello by Doce; trafficking of women; unchecked debasement of the peso; and outdated public school textbooks. Jose Vicente Salonga's finds that Jose de Venecia and 190 other congressmen got in Malacañang envelopes. This lack of accountability will spill into 2009.

Looming emergencies enroll below the radar screen. Daily, seven mothers die during delivery or a day after. That's triple the maternal death rates of China. We won't meet the Millennium Development Goal target number 6 to reduce by three-quarters the number of mothers' deaths. Each of five children don't enter our doors to 12 today will behind Malaysia's 12. Many will not "comb grey hair," as William Butler Yeats hoped.

Shredding from chronic hunger is not the stuff of headlines. Neither are the 700,000 that die every year from lack of family planning alternatives, less but that the country's capacity to feed itself dwindles as the rain top soil erodes. "Savoring self-esteem will make fight-or-flight emergency seem like child's play," the late National Economic Executive Daniel Goleman said.

Pitch-shrilled incantations, subsidized sent by politicians. Instead, we're posting a remarkable few. Which ones? That's for another column. "Don't be fooled by the calendar," the sages tell us. "You have only as many days as you can make use of."

* * *

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The year that will be

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE FEAR THAT WILL BE WILL BE ONE OF death and life.

The death will come in the form of Charter change. Malacañang and its allies will attempt to railroad through charter change in the shortest time possible, so that the people will not have the chance to organize enough opposition to it. The Senate will be railroaded, and the House will be railroaded, and the people will be railroaded. The railroading will be done in the name of "people power," which is the ultimate irony, since people power was the very thing that railroaded the Marcos dictatorship.

The fear that will be will be one of life. The fear that will be will be that the people will not be railroaded. The fear that will be will be that the people will not be railroaded by the railroaders. The fear that will be will be that the people will not be railroaded by the railroaders because they will have railroaded the railroaders themselves.

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DOJ should have investigation result fast

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ONE AND ALL.

On the opening incident in Subic Golf Club, I say that various investigations have quickly taken sides and Agnelyn Subiono, secretary, Nonie Buencamino is trying to the propaganda war. Some questions after-the-scene account with him on other issue we have asked the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) chairman: where I don't have personally but I'd like to point out that as are of justice, and every charity, for both sides, we should all wait for the result of the investigation by the Department of Justice, under orders of President Macapagal-Arroyo, is conducting. The DOJ should finish the job with utmost transparency, without fear or favor, and come out with the truth.

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

As mentioned last Tuesday, the Philippines, together with Spain, Peru and Ukraine, is very much a part of the 500th birth anniversary celebration in honor of the famed Spanish navigator explorer and linguistician Miguel Lopez de Legazpi. A major part of 10's involvement is a movement-park being built as a joint Philippine-Spanish project in the plaza of Cubao's City Hall compound. The park will be named Legazpi-Urdaneta after him. Spearheaded by the National Commission on Culture & the Arts (NCCA) under its chair, Educacion Undersecretary Vilma Labrador, the park is a collaborative work of four national artists: (Bobbaran) Lino Brocka, the first Muslim national artist, who designed the contemporary version of the Legazpi-Urdaneta, Napoleon Abueva, who designed the monument of Urdaneta, the half-galleon, half-Philippine Banca, architect Bibiloman B. Santos, who's creating the legazpi and park landscape, and Fr. Alejandro Reyes, whose literary piece, the "Ballad of Urdaneta," will be memorialized in granite the gallows's entrance to Filipino. Also translated by acting Commissioner on Filipino Filipino Chair Jonah Gamot, English, Spanish, the Basque dialect and following a recent directive of GMA, Ilocano.

To be inaugurated in March, the project will cap the yearlong celebration of Urdaneta's 500th centenary. It is is funded by a 95-million donation from Urdaneta City, led by Mayor Amadeo Perez, 94 million from the NCCA, a P1-million grant from GMA, and additional funding from the Basque regions in Spain, where Urdaneta was born in Andoain in 1498. A large delegation led by Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Jr. and Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo, will be sent by the inauguration and will be met by a counterpart group of Basque businessmen-based here, and the local Spanish community that includes Ambassador-historian Fe Pedro Estimada.

* * *

The project is only the latest in the Hispanic-Philippine link that saw GMA issuing, during her state visit to Spain in January 2007, executive (EO) declaring 2008 Urdaneta Year. 5 Philippine universities has been set up to undertake further research work and studies on this first explorer and link up 80 our only with Spain, but with the countries that Urdaneta visited. This is in addition to additional explorations also marked dinners. All these activities are expected to trigger a flurry of cultural, historical, touristic and trade activities between these Hispanic countries, to be highlighted by a return visit here of Spanish King Juan Carlos and Queen Sophia later this year.

* * *

Some folks, especially the youth, may ask, why all the fuss about Urdaneta? Why bring up the 16th century? Historical reasons tell us that after studying Latin and philosophy routine and briefly embracing military life, he took up mathematics and astronomy. What prepared him for a life of adventure, which began in an expedition to the Moluccan Islands in 1525. There he served for 11 years. On his return to Europe, he was persecuted in Lisbon by the Portuguese government for political reasons. Perhaps out of frustration, he joined the Augustinian Order in Mexico.

In 1564 Mexico came under the jurisdiction of the Audiencia, which planned an expedition to conquer and colonize the Philippine Islands. Urdaneta was ordered by King Philip II to join it. He refused but—like—the command authorities led to Miguel Lopez de Legazpi. The fleet of five boats arrived in Cebu in 1565. Urdaneta is credited by some historians for the Christianization of the Philippines. Cebu and the Basilica del Santo Niño. Legazpi decided to remain in the new colony and sent Urdaneta back to the New World later that year to find a better return route via Mexico. Only he—the friends. During that trip, Urdaneta was able to land safely in Mexico. Reaching Acapulco three months later, he and Felipe de Salcedo, Legazpi's nephew, were the ones with enough strength to visit on shore. Afterwards, he sailed for Europe on request of the Augustinians and then returned to Mexico with the intention of going to the Philippine islands again, but he was dissuaded by friends. He wrote two accounts of his voyages, with his narrative on the Philippines a valuable source of information in the history of the Indies.

* * *

Urdaneta died in Mexico City in 1568. In the 80th anniversary of his birth, Father Antonio Arrue, OSA, Executive Director Cecile Guidote Alvarez were, in his important role in the "rediscovery" of the Philippines following Ferdinand Magellan's discovery. By taking the route pioneered this EU Urdaneta, the Spanish galleons made between Manila and Acapulco. Thus, the route this early global vision discovered with deserves to be called the Urdaneta Route. Also, his encounter-location at that crucial time in world history added a significant new chapter in the history of our people, who had been seafarers long before the Spaniards landed. This international commemoration is timely for us into Gaddess Alvarez points out, the Filipino people are the "Children of the Sea," implied in our national anthem, in the global maritime trade, and this can be a good occasion to focus on our country's problems and how that plight can be alleviated.

New Year's Day salad

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

HERE'S A SALAD OF A COLUMN FOR NEW Year's Day.

Without apologies, not with low and trepidation, we must approach the coming year. Inevitably apologizers have sent people to the edge. We are desperately in search of equilibrium. The research has not yet hit on a big, big pump that we can use to suppress unwelcome talk, it's as if an asteroid is hurtling in the direction of planet Earth.

Hey, it's New Year's Day and we must laugh a little, sing a little, hope to a big new, big, scarier economic crunch. Don't even see stopping text messages from threatening space and touching the farthest corners of the globe. It mailed greetings, animated and with sounds, funny and serious, new friends and old. Do they still? Or have all come to nearly an Christmas-overkill ago?

* * *

With bold steps we welcome 2009. And because my shoulder is the two actions and worried on the first day of the year, here is something for the wise and wistful. Write the following on your cell phone:

This is a puzzle sent only 2 wise persons (it is a 10 set solving it, send the same puzzle to someone who thinks is stupid). Do not use a calculator or pencil. 8+CAT+RODENT+MOUSE+EIGHT=MOUSE+11+CAT+RODENT+MOUSE+EIGHT=MOUSE+GOAL+TOOLE2+8.*

Here's one more to bewilder you. I found this on the Internet. The math wizards among us would be challenged by this:

This math test could roll with 106 percent accuracy who your favorite person is. Please do not look at the list of choices before you've done the computation below.

Pick a favorite number from 1 to 9.

Now multiply that number with 3.

Add 3.

Again multiply with 3.

Now add up each single number. Add the two digits. The sum would be the number on the choice list that corresponds to your favorite person.

1. Queen Elizabeth
2. Osama bin Laden
3. Oprah Winfrey
4. Joe de Venecia
5. Ramon Ilusorio

Here's another one, a simple test:

Think of a number (only one digit).

Double it.

Add 4.

Again multiply with 3.

Now add up each single number. Add the two digits. The sum would be the number on the choice list that corresponds to your favorite person.

1. Queen Elizabeth
2. Osama bin Laden
3. Oprah Winfrey
4. Joe de Venecia
5. Ramon Ilusorio

But there must be more to all that is shaking up the world; there must be more beyond all this—the economic crisis, the wars, the violence, the hunger, the unjust. Who shouldn't be concerned? Who shouldn't be out on just a little longer to the altar-glow of the Christian season, savor just a little longer the Christmas overtones that settled in your soul. We need all the peace inside us we can get to counteract that there is no end that we can see to the fear.

It is light versus dark...literally—even as the new year is just beginning.

It has been bad piece of news after another if that is all we want to see. We cannot close the bad news to erase the dreamy haze of the Christmas season. It shouldn't scuff out the hope that others in the new year.

We must conserve the little peace we have inside us, because whatever energy we have gained just last—during the holidays—just that: it could be consumed very excessively for what is ahead. The recession are just a year away. Some look forward to it with hope for deliverance from this side of hope, others with dread. The concrete could lead to the flat to the edge...

But what the heck. Let us welcome the new year with great expectation. Let us look for transformation of hope.

* * *

John—this is what is worrying so many people all over the world. Relatives of overseas Filipino workers are beginning to count home even before their contracts have expired because their employers are cleaning shop. Finding work, running from work, finding meaning in work are what occupy most minds these days.

I just pulled out Matthew Arn's autographed book "The Importance of Work," printed in the 1890s. It should address both those who live to work and those who work to live. If this book were printed during the Industrial Revolution, the world would have come to an end then.

The book asks: "How many of us can really say that our work-life is in balance with our personal life—that our values and desires are reflected in our daily vocations, that our personal life and productivity are integrated, or that we find satisfaction, not a crushing defeat at the end, in our workday existence? According to most polls and reports, we're less of us do."

Matthew Arnold's work seems job: "Today close to 2 billion human beings are out of work ... At the same time, in the whole industrial world, a large number of persons are overworked, they are, in the words of 19th-century German mystic Meister Eckhart, 'burned out' by overworking, giving rise to the new addiction of workaholism."

I cannot help thinking of many Filipinos in America who are holding down several jobs in order to send their families back home. Many, in fact, in America, investing a new home and consumer goods galore, a good education for their children.

For preppers, a kind of work spirituality rooted in the unconventional of things corrected. There's got to be a balance, after reaching your existential one. The universe is a great work in itself, a great symphony, and when we find ourselves attuned to it and working in sync with it we are indeed fulfilled.

I wish you all a fulfilling year ahead. May the divine cosmic symphony be always your soul.

* * *

(mail feedback: ceresyapit@gmail.com)

Politicians primed for People Power

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION HAD BEEN THE hardest hit by martial law. Martial most effective means to suppress opposition was their head, or, to quote, the great thinker off and executed them into the following Supreme Leninist (SDL).

The political opposition was clearly down but not out. A few leaders continued to be heard, either in the remaining political parties, or in the underground publications. They were those of Lambert Tabada, labor statesman and lawyer to detainees; Jose Diokno, after Marcos the one detained longest by the government; Jovito Salonga, also remained for public consumption; Ninoy Aquino, Marcos' longest political detainee and sharpest critic; Raul Manglapus and others in America denounced the dictatorship to a handful of diverse Americans who would listen, among them Senator Edward Kennedy.

Adversity made these leaders into men of by higher principle than they were previously thought to be. Ninoy, in particular, transformed a reputation for facile, self-centered brilliance and of being a playboy politician into that of a martyr. He was martial trial for violations of the Anti-Subversion Law and the common crimes of murder and illegal possession of firearms become a cause célèbre, after he declared that he would not dispute it with his action participation.

His case was temporarily shelved in 1973 and resurrected in 1975, during which he underwent his famous fast. He ended his fast after the 40th day, having become the focus of international attention. He was tried by military commission in 1977 and put on his action sentencing to death on Nov. 23. Global foreign opinion was again aroused, and Marcos held back his executioners for another time.

He shots up his international image. Marcos announced elections for an interim National Assembly (Batasan Pambansa) as provided for in his re-presently amended Constitution. He announced that every Ninoy could run for assemblyman from his jail cell. Marcos too had said wanted for the opposition to participate in what was an election, and that the regime, after all, was popular.

A party, LABAN, was hastily formed under the chairmanship of Salonga. Ninoy would be its vice candidate. Jose Diokno disagreed and argued for a boycott. He was joined by remnants of the old Liberal Party under Gerardo Roxas, upon the urging of Laurel. Ninoy changed his mind, and supported the boycott, but the elections appear to legitimize Marcos.

But when he was interviewed by Pedro Jack Kussler-Authentikos and Juan Ponce Enrile on television, he declared he would participate. "The fact shows that. Dharcos has allowed the opposition to speak for 40 days and to come out with their platforms is already in the nature of a victory. And I am taking advantage of that opportunity," Ninoy said.

As interpreted de Dios wrote in his essay, "The Genesis of the Bantayog," on the evening of April 8, 1978, "the night of both, a number of the old Liberals came out into the streets and banged on pots, pans, and washboards, soaked bonfires in the middle of the roads, drove at random through the city in cars, jeeps, and trucks, honking horns and shouting abuse at the mechanical dog, TADHANA MAYAN!"

"This urban phenomenon was unprecedented and symptomatic—was done at that unpleasant hour—11 o'clock, the only open and large-scale resistance to the dictatorship had been put up by the armed opposition and by the workers' bodies. Students, and other local, not only added a new focus to the resistance but also succeeded in rallying upon support from the hitherto unorganized majority of the middle classes, apart from the underground mass organizations."

This event has dated the rebirth of the "full-scale" opposition, and the beginning of the one for the hearts and minds—actually, the manhood—of the electors. For the issue came down to this: could the people be made to believe, at least enough for the "Yes" vote, that Marcos' time was up?

A corpse, woven from the thread which Ninoy on his hunger protest's, bloody and other opposition tissues had started to spin, began to take shape. This was the ring that would make the distance all the way to the ring of mass civil disobedience and People Power.

When Marcos reassigned in 1981 both his executives and his Batasan majority to splendid view—to realize the dispersion Ferdinand Marcos as it would ever be—he was in a position to consolidate. And the dictatorship was losing steam.

The expansion of the government and the military which had been growing at a phenomenal rate—giving bureaucrats and soldiers good salaries, and the capital cities a construction boom. Foundations failed—some as others, extension aggravated by the tendency of senior officers to defy age to keep their privileges. Lower ranked officials turned more and more to petty corruption, following the example of their superiors. Discipline, as the Commission had outlawed, crumbled until nepotism, favoritism reigned supreme.

Fireworks dream

I DIDN'T KNOW IT THEN, SO ON THE FIRST NIGHT OF 1965, I stayed up late.

Curiously, my mama was pressing my sister's uniform on that special night and she was not wearing her red polka dot shirt. And I was watching TV in my living room, waiting for the noise in the streets, the sizable in the air and colors to light up the sky. I waited for the explosions of fireworks, but there was none—no

by a few distant popping from time to time.

YOUNG BLOOD

Jonathan A.

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the teens/preteens and below. —Ed.

When the clock struck 12, I asked my mom why it was taking so long for the world to greet the New Year with a bang.

She said it was done and I noticed it became 1 o'clock already. Now that I live in my aunt's house, I can tend to notice new years have fled, but I didn't know when the real night of noise was. It was the first time I missed a New Year's welcome.

I have always been fascinated by the dizzying fireworks displays, the deafening blasts, the thick smoke, the smell of burnt powder during the holiday season. For me these was always a happy way out there. And I always looked forward to that one night—the New Year's Eve—when the world hurls the midnight sky and take the thunderclaps of the gods. I liked December 31 better than the bowls of spaghetti, becondess glasses of soft drinks, piles of unopened gifts under the tree, Christmas carols in the air, buffets, uncles and elder cousins drinking out in the lawn.

In the province, my cousins, my cousins and I climbed to the rooftop and scanned the black horizon for a sewer or a wealthy man's house from a fusillade of glittering lights would emerge. Near the sergeant's house, a bright red dot fell slowly from the sky. Over at the banker's, a bunch of blue, pink and green colors sprang up from his porch. Millions of mushrooms of flowers and more were a morning endless series of blooms and bursts. A dragon rose up in the clouds. The Chinese businessman are off a "bulao' lob" in front of his shop. We saw lots down there working on his bamboo cannon.

"Don't give her a cracker!" we heard somebody shout "She might explode on us."

"Here's a sparkler, baby," another one says. "Have a bright as in the gods will see. We know, it's like blowing them. They throw stars at us so we can make wishes. Then, we're chasing fake stars upward so that they can make their wishes too." Then we heard somebody shouting, "Boom, there! I know what they have in mind." And then it's a throwing a triangle in an empty can of milk, toward your ears!"

With our pockets filled with coins, we jumped on and down not to improve our height but to mimic the fireworks shooting up to the sky, but when a stick from a blown bottle almost hit my cousin's head, that was our signal to scurry down but a step ladder pierced somebody's skull the next time.

That night was a night one for us. We stayed up late, bloated ourselves with cola and played cards until the next first explode your name out. We picked up here bottles lying every where and swept the debris left by exploding firecrackers. New Year was a moment to be with family and friends.

That was the last time we would hear the fullness of firecrackers screaming and exploding in a wild concert. They would be silenced after that.

As we prepared to welcome 2003, one city mayor decreed that all fireworks were banned. Oddly the blasts were banned that year.

The following year, a total ban was imposed. Early in November, the malls that lined the mall were dismantled. Even the lousy baby rockets were confiscated. Lock up all those who even think of lighting up a fuse, the mayor commanded.

The consular figure from Tondo tickets were down to zero. There was no footage of a kid screaming on an operating table with his finger dangling by a stub.

Next observations, the mayor suggested. Bang your pots and pans. Drag scrap metal with your cars. Turn up the volume on your stereo. Sing to your heart's content. Hold a party at your favorite restaurant. Make noise. Blow your horns.

The same that area supposed to observe the night was shrouded in a whisper. Between those quiet times, the citizens all legislated the decree by running it into an enthusiastic. And the noise died.

There have been times when we longed for the high we experienced at the start of the new millennium. But we have been found other alternatives. We remember the household gather around a low table out in the lawn, drink whatever we found in the fridge, hide to some dark spot and smoke some spiced pot. And just like when we were kids back on the rooftop, the night would have two hundreds of colors.

Then we hear almost forgotten the fireworks. We are too old and we're jump up and down and scream our lungs out. Our younger cousins, nephews and nieces just rose at us from the side, waiting for their turn at the microphone. They have only seen fireworks on television and they would never grasp to the rooftop. By morning, they will gather the empty bottles and sweep the cigarette butts we have thrown to the yard.

During the Yuletide season, I no longer scan the midnight sky for that elusive flower of lights. I no longer roam the gods by waving a sparkler in the dark night. I no longer want to hear the wheels world-mighty get rid of the old year.

But if at some time I get to sniff a whiff of gunpowder in the air, maybe I'll be tempted to run downstairs down the street, a little devil of a triangle may have exploded under mouth an empty can. Somewhere in the recesses of my mind, a last childhood will be unloosed. I just hope the smell is not that of gunpowder that left a big from down the street with a hole on his head.

Happy New Year's five, I light up a different kind of firecracker, a firecracker that does not burst in the sky but explodes somewhere deep in my mind. I am careful. I know on which night to keep explored which to detain away.

Jonathan A., 19, is a freshman creative writing student at the University of the Philippines in Mindanao.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and your parents enrolled in or, if employed, the post. Include your daytime and/or mobile number as well, only if this is not to be published.

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Failure to enforce cracker law shows gov't ineptness

LETTERS

SERVING REVEALS MORE patently this country's miserable failure to enforce its laws than the way we celebrate New Year's Eve. What can be more ironic, indeed, than our police and health authorities watching the whole nation, through the media, against the use of banned firecrackers then declaration of the holidays, only to wake up on the wee hours of Jan. 1, finding buildings burnt and hospitals filled with bleeding patients—all because of firecrackers.

Now what's that got to do with unity a festival of the Roman Catholic Church, even as it celebrates the feast of the Circumcision on this day, they few people are aware of (the advisory leaves to everyone their make note and victory or view Week for in order to drive away evil spirits—an originally pagan custom being practiced by countless now by Christians.

It is particularly puzzling and embarrassing that the Chinese were the ones who introduced the firecrackers to the country. And yet no wisdom was spared of mass casualties due to firecrackers as the Chinese themselves valiantly celebrate once New Year between January and February holidays have served heard of any other nation that celebrates in this 'fun to crash festival' manner as we Pinoys do. This can only imply that we are the most irresponsible people in the whole world when it comes to celebrating the New Year! Given many other national embarrassments, truth to tell, happen only in the Philippines, where or when, and, may we, as a people, become a bit more popular (and conscious! But for more pounding in the face and while certain types of fireworks are strictly banned i.e., illegal and, therefore, dealt rule and law are punishable, we still have to see or read of people hospitalized for openly posting the public in nation any, because of firecrackers. The most unconscionable proof that our law violated the law is what to guard its personality de- ding in that while the law forbids. Then, in on pot him behind bars after due treatment in the hospital. Or maybe—just maybe—we need a law punishing the parents of a minor who violates the firecracker ban, whether the minor, or somebody else, is hurt or not. I mean, the law has to be harsh, even for problems.

Speaking of accidents, I am reminded of the safety manager of a multinational company I worked with many years ago. He said in one of his lectures, "No one is to resign from pursuing the violating our safety rules. I tell personally we've the letter of notification on the coffin of anyone of you who does on the job for not observing those rules." The company's safety record then was enviable.

—RUBY L. CORONEL
rubycoronel2004@yahoo.com

Tarpaulins emblazoning politicians' stupid faces

DESERT ANYONE FEEL ANY outrage anymore? We need not look deep into the complex and complicated skullduggeries orchestrated by blackmailing artists are hopelessly interested in spraying thanks to the minds of "our color-girl-hue." With no less than the Supreme Court upholding its prosecution of a president's detention against self-incrimination, public accountability has just taken a back seat to the constitutional schema of things.

Let's just take a cursory look at what is plain and obvious to our common senses. Imelda Ferrazzo, chair of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, is going to town, not only in Metro Manila but all over the entire country with giant-sized tarpaulins emblazoning his stupid face—on in your face defiance of all proscriptions against premature electioneering for simply having no qualms about misspending public funds and making a travesty of things as a member deems appropriate. If God forbid, this guy ever becomes president, imagine what he is capable of doing with the national treasury!

In Quezon City, councilors are having a field day flipping their fingers into the city coffers to expend for their own opportunistic, blossoming their stupid faces everywhere for the same insidious purpose. If it's not library Christmas or Happy New Year, it's happy feasts, happy graduation, happy reunion, happy birthday, happy anniversary, happy belated anniversary, happy belated birthday, happy advanced Christmas, happy belated Christmas, happy belated New Year, happy belated Valentine's Day, happy belated Holy Week, happy belated Labor Day, happy belated Independence Day, happy belated Barangay Day

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Parish 'tapungan' keeps it alive

SOCORRO, ORIENTAL MINDORO—FATHER Joseph Meralin Borongaling distributed Christmas calendars to his parish leaders with a personal message of gratitude.

"This is to thank them for their positive response to the tapungan that aims to make the parish self-reliant," explains the 42-year-old parish priest of the Holy Family Parish (HFP) here, about 50 kilometers away from the City of Calapan.

Inaugural in the Tagalog/ subanogan or hegemikon, which is how HFP calls its parishioners' voluntary contributions of time, treasure and talents for needs of the church.

It was launched in May and there are now more than 2,000 parishioners who participate with their monthly share of rosters, ranging from P5 to P500.

In the case of Antonina Bienvenido, 55, called Nanay Asuncion, of Barangay Lapog Riverside, the allocated P50 monthly tapong (share), from her fisherhusband's income.

"Her case inspires us. Really, it's not so much the amount that matters, but the big heart that responds to God's love by wanting to share," says Annie Arceo Lauron, a pastoral coordinator.

Borongaling says the Holy Family Parish used to be known as "better off" compared to other parishes.

But, he reveals, it was because of earnings from the unconsumed fees for the dead and from the parish cemetery.

Shift

In implementing tapungan, Borongaling has been very careful to be misinterpreted as "money-centered."

It took his team two years of preparations—which included recollections, pilgrimage conference, homilies, festivals and community consultations.

In the parish's 2007 pilgrimage, Borongaling emphasized that tapungan is a pledge to God and not to the priest, citing Bible passages and explaining where the funds would go.

Lauron, working closely with Borongaling, recalls that the program was not spared from initial doubts and negative reactions because they were changing traditional practices.

"I really was not comfortable (the people would ask how much they had to pay for a sacrament because it's a service of the church)," confesses Borongaling.

With his new team, Borongaling made tapungan creative and colorful to attract attention and excitement, and utilized the LCD projector.

A liturgical musician, he composed an inspirational theme song titled "Sa Diwa ng Kapatiran," whose tune is that of a lively march.

Lauron explains how tapungan works.

FR. JOSEPH Borongaling and church worker Annie Arceo Lauron are among the driving forces behind tapungan.

The parishioners are grouped into four zones in the publication and 11 communities following a color coding for practical reasons, like easy segregation, attendance and counting.

Each individual gets a one-page letter indicating his pledge of attendance of hours per week and amount per month to be contributed.

He signs this up and submits it to the parish.

Borongaling revises the letter by reminding:

A recollection thanksgiving service entitled "Ang Aking Pangako sa Diyos" with the singing ng Pamilyang Mindoreno (HFP/M) logo covered with plastic.

It contains the name of the zone and community on top. Four volunteers under it are monthly duty (from May 2008 to May 2009), the amount pledged, the amount received by the counter, and the signature of the volunteer who received the amount.

Starting until the presentation, while done by volunteers, cost around P5,000 (H1R), including photocopying, boxes, clothes bags and tapungan service banker.

Some system

The monthly pledges can be submitted in four ways: During the monthly community Mass, during Tapungan Sunday which is every fourth Sunday of the month in the parish church (first and second Mass) and individually through the parish office, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Lauron advises, "Now, these weekend envelopes become useless, making why they do not have. But it no longer has to be before Borongaling to explain but those who have pledged."

The counting of tapong is done on a Sunday after the last Sunday by four counters (a member and three members) from the Parishioner Pastoral Council (PPC) and Parish Finance Council (Pafinco).

An incentive, the community gets 20 per cent of the total monthly tapong in their area.

This November, Borongaling gleefully reports that the tapong collection has increased to P65,000 from P42,632 when it was launched in May.

The monthly parish expenses are about P180,000.

Learning experience

Father Borongaling says how they got the eight hectares now can be attributed to tapungan as the past when he was assigned there as vicar and tithed how voluntary giving can work in the parish.

He is most grateful to the Hapag ng Pamilyang Mindoreño, the core program of the diocese launched on July 13, 2006 whose priests were asked about their dream for their parish.

"I wanted people to make the church a part of their life," says Borongaling who is now 33 years old in the ministry.

When he was assigned at the HFP in 2006, he kept in his office the dreams of founders a legacy in three forms: A self-reliant parish which supports all the needs of the parish, a meaningful liturgy where people understand it, appreciate it and are able to put it into action, and an increase in the number of members (homecoming).

New Borongaling's dream is coming alive.

Mindoreno T. Viroña

SOME of the materials that Fr. Joseph Borongaling uses to make tapungan work in the parish through community consultations and creative programs.

25-year-old OFW from Naga City fulfills his dream: Wedding

NAGA CITY—RAYMUND CARLOS RAPOSA, 25, who has work as a document comptroller in Singapore, flew home before Christmas this year not just to be with his loved ones during the holidays but to be able to marry the mother of his two children on New Year's week.

The wedding to Gaudan, 35, will be a dream come true for him who only four years ago was unprepared to become a young father.

He remembers that time when he learned he would become a father and how he had to quit schooling as he wanted to face the overnight enormous task of creating a family.

At that time he had yet to finish a college degree and he did not have a stable job to offer financial security to his family.

Raposa found work as a mall coastal agent and as a part-time modeling coordinator in the city to provide for his family.

"Soon, it became clear that my earnings from shuffling tasks would never be enough. Then I learned from a relative that an engineering company in Singapore was in need of quality control document comptroller, and knowing that the probability I would be hired was low because I did not have a college degree."

He was hired, however, as soon as he was able to secure his working visa. Two years ago, he joined about 23,000 Filipinos working in Singapore.

Leaving his family in their little hut in Bula, Camarines Sur, was heart-wrenching, according to him.

On a bus on the way to Manila and while checking into his room in Singapore, his family on a video where they traveled him route he was silently crying.

Homesick

Working far from his family proved to be very difficult for him. There were days when he had to overcome sudden pangs of homesickness.

"While I was away I thought of who would teach my children things they needed to learn as they grow up."

"Good thing the time I had spent as a newspaperman made me become used to spending time away from my family."

Vicious cycle

But he said he had to keep his mind busy during the times he was free to keep himself from feeling lonely and thinking remarks about home and the children. "I read books, mostly escapist fiction to a nearby library."

RAYMUND Carlos Raposa, with his son John Gabriel and daughter Kimberly Claire.

"I do not know for how long I would be gone," he said, knowing that working abroad, even on a contractual basis, could become a vicious cycle.

"Because I was not a college graduate, the job I got was not high-paying."

In his case, his basic wage amounts to 800 Singapore dollars or the equivalent of around P35,000 a month. His total monthly income, including allowances and overtime pay however, amounts to 21,000 Singapore dollars or P63,000 a month.

He would send most of his wage directly to his family, leaving only allowances for food and other incidental expenses.

But he said he was given a wage increase lately. "The increase was equivalent to a P12,000 wage increase in the Philippines."

"Unlike my field workmates who were mostly engineers and highly paid, I have no formal training for the kind of job I have. So I learned to accept that I would be a bottom-feeder."

He shared that working for a Singaporean company was not as difficult as everyone thought it would be.

His job as a quality control document comptroller included checking the accuracy and timeliness of quality control reports of manufactured pipes and other industrial products.

"It's my kind of work, discipline and strict adherence to work ethics have to go hand in hand. Otherwise, it would be very boring doing the same thing on an everyday basis."

His supervisors treat him and his workmates kindly and fairly. "A company manager once told me I have potentials which I could hone by further training," he said.

Wedding

Then he saved money for his wedding.

"I decided to marry the mother of my children as there are days all the hard work I did abroad was not only for the children but also for her. I want her to know that I love her very much. I am aware that it was not only I who worked hard for the family."

On Jan. 4 he will marry at the Basilica Minore of the Virgin of Peñafrancia in Naga City.

Days after his wedding day he would again leave for Singapore to fulfill the terms of his contract.

"Although I admire those who choose to remain and work in the country, I believe that the millions of Filipinos working overseas really contribute a lot to the growth of the country," he said.

"Filipinos working abroad contribute to the economy without the country spending for them. It's a 'win' scenario in the country," he said.

He said he is praying it would be the last time he would leave his family (Gradyn and their two children—John Gabriel 4, and Kimberly Claire, 2.

After finishing his contract and saving enough money he said he would be returning to college to pick up from where he left and start a new life as the father who would do everything for his family.

He said he wishes other young fathers like him were of good both and planned parents, "because in these trying times, we need all the help we can get." Jerson Cabrillas Salitas

E-mail us at ... Website: www.inquirer.net/regions
Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Quarrying linked to Pampanga murder

FLORIDABLANCA, PAMPANGA—A SUPERVISOR'S discovery of field irregularities in the sand industry and his efforts to rid these are seen as the possible reasons in his murder last Sunday here, his colleagues in the good governance movement said.

"I am 99 percent sure, the killing is related to the provincial quarry operations," Oscar Ayeo, chair of the Solong Floridablanca, said of Rolando Malit's death.

Malit, 47, a member of the monitoring team of the special quarry committee Bulan (Buyo a Linggatpan at Sinilapcal), was gunned down by two motorcycle-riding men in front of his neighbor's house in Barangay Del Carmen here. He was officially in the time of the attack.

Open letter

Ayeo showed the Inquirer a copy of an open letter that Malit wrote two weeks before the murder to the three-page letter, Malit said he and his group had "uncovered irregularities in the whole operations of the quarry industry."

According to Ayeo, Malit was preparing a detailed report containing recommendations to Gov. Eddie Panlilio. That report is being awaited.

Adonis Simpao, chair of the Pampanga arm Kaanap, confirmed the information.

Simpao said Malit also showed him new messages containing threats. The student claimed being members of the New People's Army.

Malit's resignation in the recommend army divided leading the threats. Ayeo said the victim suspected that the threatening text messages were from some erring quarry checkers. He did not identify them, though.

Senior Supt. Keith Singian, Pampanga police director, on Tuesday said the motive in the killing is still being determined.

Death threats

Provincial administrator Wilson Sabio confirmed that Malit reported getting death threats on two separate occasions in November.

Quarry personnel of the provincial government raised weak safety concerns and put in additional precautionary measures to enable them to continue their work to at least 41 checkpoints in the province's sand-rich areas, Malit said on Monday.

They have not abandoned their posts despite the security, she said.

Those quarry workers, as well as those in the provincial treasurer's office which collects the P150 sand tax and P150 sand tax, have helped the provincial government collect P125 million as of Dec. 29—the highest collection made in 10 months.

Malit joined the Bulan last July as 40 disgruntled quarry workers rammed their cattle over Bonifacio's alleged failure to address their complaint for the workers' unconditional reinstatement. The governor denied to hire them for short-term contracts but rushed them eventually for violations of civil service rules. Rosario Bruno, Inquirer General Luzon

US envoy says RP resilient to survive US recession

BAGUIO CITY—UNITED STATES Ambassador Kristie Kenney on Tuesday said it would be hard to predict how soon but economy can recover from its first recession in nearly a century but said the Philippines is resilient enough to weather through America's impact on the local economy.

Noting the termination of about 400 employees of the Texas Instruments (Philippines) Inc. (TIPI) at the Baguio City Economic Zone, Kenney said American investments in the country have started fortifying against their home offices' financial troubles.

Kenney, who hosted reporters at a "Christmas Coffee" at the Ambassador's Residence at Camp John Hay here, noted the strong upstream between the Philippines and the US because of exports and globalization.

She said she would be unable to hazard a guess about the recession or if President-elect Barack Obama assumes office on Jan. 20.

His prediction

"It would all depend on what kind of economic recovery program (Obama would impose) ... How people [in the United States] spent during Christmas ... It's just impossible to predict," she said.

Kenney said Obama had already warned his countrymen to prepare for "tough times to get the F[ilipino] economy going."

For getting the economy moving by other US firms here like Intel Philippines and Sharp Phils, Kenney said American investors have been cushioned from the recession because of the Philippines' good economic situation.

She said the Philippine banks should problems because it has few loan transactions with US banks.

Despite the crisis, Coca Cola Bottlers Co. is opening a new bottled facility in Sta Rosa, Laguna, she said.

Pub is also diversified accessory, she said, which continues to attract American investments.

The National Economic and Development Authority said the country has thriving local industries which are partially insulated from a world financial crisis, such as agriculture and mining.

Continued aid

Kenney said the recession should not hamper direct US government aid to the country including an annual $15 million appropriation for benefits of Filipino veterans.

She said US aid to the Philippines does not only help the country but US interests as well. The Philippines after all is "an environmental superpower" because of its untapped natural resources, she said.

The ambassador normally hosts an annual personal get-together for Baguio residents, but this may be Kenney's last.

Kenney said Obama's assumption into office means the end of her three-year posting. "I've only been extended from March to August 2009," she said.

She left behind a New Year's wish for "safety" because "when we're all together, we are strong," she said. Eleanor Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

GOOD LUCK FRUITS
Vendors in Legazpi City hope to cash in on a belief that having round fruits, such as oranges, on the table on New Year's Day will bring luck all year round. JOVEN CAGANDAHAN/INQUIRER CENTRAL LUZON

Bomb blast kills suspect, injures cop in S. Kudarat

COTABATO CITY—A POWERful bomb ripped through a tricycle loaded with dynamite on Tuesday in Tacurong, killing the suspected would-be bomber and wounding a policeman, the military said.

The improvised explosive device went off near a police checkpoint in the town of Tacurong around 6:30 p.m., Col. Rolando Eclavea said in reports.

He said police officers manning the checkpoint were inspecting the tricycle with the bomb suspect when the bomb went off.

The identities of the suspected bomb courier and the police officer were not immediately available.

Eclavea could not say where the tricycle was headed in or did come.

The blast came amid heightened security in many parts of Central Mindanao in the wake of recent bomb attacks blamed on "rogue" Moro rebels.

An hour before the explosion, police warned that Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels may target bomb attacks in the region as on before the New Year.

"The rebels are using female couriers just as what they did in previous attacks," said Chief Supt. Benaiah Juhasmi, police chief for Central Mindanao.

Early this month, three people were killed and 46 others were wounded in bomb explosions in two department stores in Digos City. The military blamed the attacks on MILF guerillas for the country's largest rebel organization denied the accusation.

The government has suspended peace talks with the MILF after two rebel commanders launched a string of deadly attacks in some parts of Mindanao. Analiza Malion, Inquirer Mindanao

MILF sets 5 conditions to resume talks

COTABATO CITY—THE MORO Islamic Liberation Front on Tuesday said it will only resume peace talks with the government on five conditions.

Murad Ebrahim, chair of the MILF central committee, issued a statement outlining the MILF conditions before peace talks resume with the Arroyo administration.

The MILF said it would only resume talking peace with the new government peace panel provided the Philippine military cease all offensives in Mindanao, even those in the guise of pursuing so called "rogue" MILF field commanders.

The MILF also warns Malaysia to stay as third party facilitator.

It also expressed willingness to resume peace talks provided there is an international guarantee from states or association of nations and that both sides must resolve the issue of the boycotted signing of the memorandum of agreement on ancestral domain (MOA-AD).

The MOA-AD, concluded by government and MILF peace panel members but was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, is still "a done deal" for the MILF, Murad said.

The MILF chief said another condition for the immediate resumption of peace talks is an assurance that the International Monitoring Team would be allowed to discharge its duties and functions until investigators all ceasefire violations from July 1, 2008.

Murad blamed the failures of the 11-year old peace process on the government's inconsistency. Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

Tribe to greet New Year with 'unpolluted' noise

LUCENA CITY—INDIGENOUS people in the Sierra Madre mountain ridden the traditional practice of bombarders of greeting New Year with a big bang from all sorts of firecrackers and pyrotechnics.

The practice of bombarders of exploding firecrackers to welcome the New Year is a big no, no to the natives. We abhor the use of all sorts of firecrackers. It's not only dangerous, it's only a waste of precious money," Ranny Antonino, Agta tribal leader, said Monday in a mobile phone interview from the Tribal Center for Development building in Infanta town in northern Quezon.

He said for generations, tribal leaders have been encouraging the practice of creating "unpolluted noise" to welcome every New Year.

"We literally shoot as loud as we can, play our musical tradition with full volume, bang cans and pots, blow horns made from indigenous leaves. But no 'pla pla' or 'Bubble' or 'firecrack n' Bubu,' [types of firecrackers]," Antonino said.

For the mountain people, the intrusion of firecrackers noise to disturb the peace and silence of Sierra Madre is an "abominable act."

"The deafening blast of firecrackers is like the roar of power to attack by illegal loggers and cachuet of gunfire between rebels and the AFP, [New People's Army]. They are all unwanted in Sierra Madre. They are all disrespecting the holy silence of the mountains," Antonino said philosophically.

After welcoming the New Year with their traditional rituals, Antonino said the whole tribe shares a single feast, mostly of native delicacies made from glutinous rice and available forest food products.

FIRECRACKERS, such as those being seized by police in Davao del Sur, are taboo to the Agta tribe. MARIANNE BERMUDEZ/INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

"And if we're lucky to catch a wild boar (baboy damo), it will be a bonus. Its meat, udon, cooking oil is now getting very difficult. With the clustering noise from power saws, the herd of wild pigs has retreated to the inner bosom of the mountain. They are afraid of strange human noise," he said.

When asked what the Agta tribe aspires for this coming New Year, he meekly replied: "We just want the government and the lowlanders to respect the sanctity of our land. No more wars inside the Sierra Madre, no more illegal logging and no more land grabbing."

Agta people are often forced to leave their homes in the slopes of the Sierra Madre in Central Luzon and seek refuge at the Tribal Center for Development building for fear of getting caught in the crossfire between government forces and communist rebels.

The natives once protested the alleged encroachment of Agta land to become members of the paramilitary Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU).

Antonino stressed that the Agta tribe is not composed of warriors but of simple peaceful mountain farmers.

"Bloodbath and violence is alien in our culture," Antonino said. Bobby T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy S. Molavedoro • Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Dehesa

PORTLAND guard Steve Blake (right) pounces the ball against Boston's Rajon Rondo.

Blazers deal Celts third loss in 4 games

PORTLAND, OREGON—THE BOSTON CELtics surprise slide continued on Tuesday, as the defending NBA champions were beaten 91-86 by an undermanned Portland Trail Blazers.

Steve Blake had 21 points and LaMarcus Aldridge added 20 for Portland, which was without All-Star guard Brandon Roy and was coming off a seven-game losing streak. The win move the Blazers equal top of the Northwest Division.

Boston has lost three from four after having broken the franchise record for consecutive wins with 19. Prior to the holiday slump, the Celtics had lost only two games this season.

In Miami, Dwyane Wade had 22 points and 12 assists as Miami beat Cleveland, 104-91, and dropped LeBron James' pro record on his birthday to 9-5.

Mavis Chalmers added 25 points and eight assists for the Heat who put the game away with a 16-3 run in the third quarter.

On the day he turned 24, James scored 24 of his 28 points in the second half, almost enough to rally Cleveland out of its biggest deficit of the season, a 16-point hole in halftime.

In San Antonio, Milwaukee hung on to beat San Antonio, 100-98, when Spurs star Tim Duncan missed a layup with 3.8 seconds to go.

In Indianapolis, Jermaine O'Neal scored 12 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter to help streaking Atlanta beat Indiana, 130-104.

The Hawks have won six straight games and nine of 10 to move within three games of Southeast Division leader Orlando. —AP

TIMES BEAT: Boston 91, Memphis 86; New Orleans 97, Washington 81; Dallas 105, Minnesota 102; New York 102, Charlotte 88; Sacramento 92, LA Clippers 90

COLLEGIATE CAGE WARS

Blue and red color a year of upheavals

By Jasmine W. Payo and Cedrill P. Tugas

COLLEGE BASKETBALL IN THE POST SEASON HAS BEEN SOOTHING HOT sportswatcher as rivalries—most notably between the blue and the green—reached new heights and a number of players were thrust into the limelight for their stellar performance in 2008.

The year also witnessed creative basketball minds at work...coaches who dared to be different and who dared to change. One over a fierce rival for his school's first title in six years (the other over an upstart to build a new league dynasty.

From former farmers to hard heads, dirty fingers to post-game confrontations, game pressure to the near-pullout of referees and a shooting fanatism that nearly set off a scrambling search—both in and around provided as many talking points.

And, although controversies abounded, these were nevertheless only the spectacle that can only happen on court.

Marking their return in glory after six long years, the Blue Eagles dethroned three-rival La Salle via a two-game sweep of their UAAP Finals duel in September.

Then at the NCAA, four finals entries in a row to a third straight year after the Red Lions routed the Jose Rizal Heavy Bombers in the rubber match of their best-of-three championship series.

"I know this team will reach its full potential in time," said San Beda coach Nenadic Lim of his charges. "I never questioned their heart."

"We're a pretty intelligent team this year," said coach Norman Black after Ateneo poured passed its fourth UAAP championship with one of its finest runs.

The hostility between the two elite teams was as vocal as the hype as the Green Archers reportedly refused to recognize the runner-up trophy after the Final Four match that also saw the ejection of La Salle star Rico Maierhofer for allegedly fanning a dirty finger.

Rabeh Al-Hussaini, son of a Bahraini father and his Filipino wife, displayed his remarkable transformation from a forgettable, underperforming big man into a dominant force deserving of the Most Valuable Player plum.

But many others stepped up—including Finals MVP Sonny Barlos, skipper Chris Tiu, Rookie of the Year Ryan Buenafuego and Eric Salamat—to help the Blue Eagles savage up the season entirely as a contender. The 11 straight victories and only one loss in the elimination round.

Nigerian Sam Miner, who bagged his second NCAA MVP award, came to the fore for the Lions. But he would later not made such a tremendous impact on the Red Lions' triumph without Reposcer Gonzalo Gregorio.

The season's decider, however, turned out to be the bruise afternoon shooting of Jhaz Ramirez that ultimately led to the Lions' 69-66 victory in the championship game.

The victory also extinguished doubts about Black's season-long performance after costing the Lions one victory in the elimination round for wearing the wrong uniform. Blame found himself in the middle of a controversy again shortly before the Final Four when police reportedly questioned him over his alleged involvement in a fracas against Letran.

Controversy raised its ugly head again when referees, borrowed from the PBL, threatened to pull out of the season-ending Finals over P50,000 in prize money.

It all started when a ranking official of the Basketball Association of the Philippines reportedly made a call to PBL commissioner Chino Trinidad to help reign in the refs.

The season's shocker, however, turned out to be the bruise afternoon shooting of Jhaz Ramirez that ultimately led to the Lions' 69-66 victory in the championship game.

The victory also extinguished doubts about Black's season-long performance after costing the Lions one victory in the elimination round for wearing the wrong uniform. Blame found himself in the middle of a controversy again shortly before the Final Four when police reportedly questioned him over his alleged involvement in a fracas against Letran.

Controversy raised its ugly head again when referees, borrowed from the PBL, threatened to pull out of the season-ending NCAA Finals match in protest against an allegation they were favoring the Harris Boxhoes

Tagaytay-RP bets boost title bid

By Ray Loarca

AL AIN, UAE—SUDDENLY, TAGAYTAY CITY-Philippines is solidly back in the hunt for the 2nd Asian Club Cup crown.

The all-Greenhornet Filipinos finished their night against Club Institute of Singapore, 3.5-0.5, in the sixth round on Sunday to keep pace with Qi Xiao of China and lock closer to post-ester Al Ain Team A entering the final round Wednesday.

Aplus METRO
Editor Abelardo S. Ulandey

Tondo residents trade in firecrackers for rice

Children exchange sparklers for toys, too

By Tina G. Santos

OPTING FOR PRACTICALITY OVER TRADITION, hundreds of residents in Tondo, Manila, yesterday traded in their firecrackers for several kilos of rice and toys.

The ride-for-fireworks project was initiated by Rep. Benjamin Naño of the city's first district who said he wanted to encourage people to save rather than spend money in welcoming the New Year.

"This is part of our campaign against the use of all kinds of firecrackers," he told the Inquirer. "We advised them to stay home and beautiful months instead to welcome the New Year. They're much safer than fireworks."

Under Naño's project, any person who gave up any volume of firecrackers received at least four kilos of rice.

Children who followed their parents' example—trading in their sparklers or bows—each got a toy.

Naño said around 30,000 residents benefited from his project.

He added that he has been distributing rice every Christmas to poor residents in his district but this year, he decided to do something different.

"I decided to give it a turn. I thought, why not ask them to surrender their fireworks in exchange for rice and toys for a safer New Year celebration?," the congressman said.

He explained that he came up with the idea after a neighbor, a teenager who was his child's classmate, lost a hand when a firecracker he lit up exploded prematurely.

WHALE OF A TALE
The tail of a Minke whale, which was found floating in Manila Bay this other day is lowered into a grave in a bid ceremony at the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources compound in Dagupan City.

Watch what you say about yourself

ACCORDING TO THE LATEST SURVEY of the Social Weather Stations, nine out of 10 Filipinos have high hopes for 2009 despite obvious economic woes. Good for them.

That's a good sign. Positive thinking gets positive results.

But it would be better if the Filipino were to translate their positive thinking into positive words about themselves.

Most Filipinos don't watch what they say about their financial condition.

ON TARGET

RAMON FARR

A typical Pinoy always says, "Ang hirap ng buhay, walang tapong pera(sic)ahan (Life is hard, we're not getting anywhere)" when confronted with difficulties.

"Wala akong pera (I'm broke)," "Mahirap ang buhay (Life is hard)," "Bisyo't sugal ko buhay ko (My life is ruined)." These are the words we hear from most Pinoys.

As a result, the universe gives Filipinos more of the things they complain about.

Words are very powerful. If you say something over and over, they become true after a while.

If you keep telling your brother or neighbor who runs to borrow money from you that you're broke to keep them off your back, you will soon go broke even if at the moment money is coming out of your ears.

You're making poverty because of your words. "I'm broke," literally, you become penniless.

Why can't Filipinos say, "Mayaman ako (We're rich)" or "Malapit na ng-ang pumasok (It's just a matter of time before we get rich)"?

Merely replacing negative words (I'm broke) with positive ones (I'm rich) will make one prosperous in the long run.

Imagine millions of Filipinos affirming in unison every day, "We're a rich nation." Those words will eventually make the Philippines a developed country.

Of course, it will take time.

And the first move to start changing the mass consciousness of Filipinos is now.

After all, we're really a rich nation that chooses to be poor.

* * *

During the time of President Ford, the country became an economic tiger cub in Asia because of his slogan, "Kaya natin 'to (We can get through this)," with a thumbs-up sign.

Ms. Tabuke dreamed the slogan into the consciousness of the Filipinos, and we became prosperous.

But when when President Estrada took over, he replaced FVR's slogan with "Kaya nating magtiis (We can get through the hard times)."

While he was telling the poor Filipino masses to bite the bullet, Estrada was drinking the most expensive wines, gambling with his cronies and mistresses.

The result was that the country became poor again.

Poverty became worse under President Gloria. You're naive if you don't know why.

METROBRIEFS

Fire hits NFA warehouse

A 5:02 a.m. fire destroyed the rice warehouse in Taguig City yesterday morning, damaging around P500,000 worth of property, SPO1 Douglas Montano, arson investigator of the city fire station, said. A 40-minute fire broke out in the National Food Authority warehouse in the Food Terminal Inc. complex at 7:40 a.m. The blaze destroyed P500,000 worth of equipment used in repacking rice. Witnesses told Bfumano that before the fire broke out, the lights in the warehouse were flickering. "Some of the witnesses said they have been experiencing power fluctuations (in the past days)," the arson investigator said in a phone interview. He added that fortunately, the fire did not spread to the rice stocks kept in the warehouse. No one was reported hurt or killed either.

Alice Murillo

2 hurt in motorcycle mishap

TWO MEN were injured in an accident on the northbound lane of the Edsa-Magallanes flyover yesterday morning. SPO1 Miguel Descalso of the Makati traffic unit said Cardo Almerol, 45, a scavenger, was seriously injured when he was hit by a Honda motorcycle (JB 5006) driven by Michael Consigado, 30, of Mandaluyong City, at around 12:05 a.m. Almerol, who was apparently walking on the flyover, suffered several fractures while Consigado sustained minor cuts. Both were rushed to the Capital ng Makati for treatment but Almerol was later transferred to the Orthopedic Hospital for surgery. The other day, the flyover's southbound lane was temporarily closed after scales were found on the 69-year-old bridge.

Jillianne M. Lopez

DID YOU KNOW

IN THE FIRST half of 2008, more than 8,000 building construction permits were approved in Metro Manila. More than half of these (about 4,700) were for the construction of residential buildings.

(pnl L. Bonifacio, Inquirer Research

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The WORLD

John Lawrence B. Ganza

Nasa: Columbia crew had no chance

Final report on 2003 shuttle disaster says astronauts had a minute to live

WASHINGTON—WHEN the first of many loud alarms sounded on the space shuttle Columbia, the seven astronauts had about a minute to live, though they didn't know it.

The pilot, William McCool, pushed several buttons trying to right the ship as it tumbled out of control. He didn't know it was futile. Most of the crew were following Nasa procedures, spending more time preparing the shuttle than themselves for the return to Earth.

Some weren't wearing their bulky protective gloves and still had their helmet visors open. Some weren't fully strapped in. One was barely seated.

In seconds, the darkened cockpit holding the crew lost pressure. The astronauts blacked out. If the loss of pressure didn't kill them immediately, they would be dead from violent gyrations that knocked them about the ship.

In short, Columbia's astronauts were quickly doomed.

A new Nasa report released Tuesday details the chaotic final minutes of Columbia, which disintegrated over Texas on Feb. 1, 2003.

The 400-page report took four years to complete and its conclusion will be used in configuring the future Orion spacecraft that will eventually replace the current fleet of three shuttles due to be retired in 2010.

After a highly detailed description of what happened as the seven astronauts when Columbia disintegrated as it reentered the atmosphere, Nasa concluded that their safety belts, space suits and helmets failed to work as expected.

Nasa deputy associate administrator Wayne Hale said the discussion was "the final report on Columbia."

In the report, investigators admitted they could not clearly determine whether the astronauts were dead or unconscious due to the sudden decompression of the cabin, just before the shuttle lost control of reentry and broke into pieces.

The report said "the next initial real mechanism to the crews' shoulder harnesses did not lock ... At a result, the seven crewmember downward crew was exposed to cyclical nonlinear motion while restrained only at the lower body.

"Crew helmets do not conform to the head. Consequently, helmet visions recovered to the unconscious or deceased crew due to the lack of upper body support and restraint."

"Crew survival suits should be evaluated as an integrated system to determine the various weak points...thermal, pressure, windblast, thermal exposure," the report recommended, and "alternatives should be explored to strengthen the weak areas."

"The new suits that are going to be in Orion spacecraft under design right now would not have that problem, as the crew can be completely encapsulated in all the critical times," Hale said, when the report was presented to the press.

It was not a problem with the Columbia crew, Hale said, adding, "it is a basic problem of suit design ... and that we intend to fix in the future."

The Orion is a component of Constellation, a National Aeronautics and Space Administration program that includes new launch vehicles for future missions to the moon and Mars. It is scheduled to replace the shuttle fleet in 2014.

Hale said the integrated system recommended in the report would not have saved the Columbia crew from its fate, since the entire shuttle disintegrated.

Killed in the Columbia disaster along with pilot McCool, were commander Rick Husband, Michael Anderson, David Brown, Kalpana Chawla, Laurel Clark, and Israel's first astronaut, Ilan Ramon.

Columbia was the second space shuttle Nasa has lost. The first to its wing was caused by a piece of foam insulation that broke off the fuel tank and slammed into it on launch.

The shuttle Challenger blew up shortly after liftoff on 1986, also claiming seven lives. Investigators in both accidents pointed to a Nasa culture of ignoring problems that later turned fatal. AP and AFP

THE SPACE shuttle Columbia crew, front from left, astronauts Rick D. Husband, mission commander; Kalpana Chawla, mission specialist; and William C. McCool, pilot. Rear from left are David M. Brown, Laurel B. Clark, and Michael P. Anderson, all mission specialists, and Ilan Ramon, payload specialist, representing the Israel Space Agency.

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WORLD BRIEFS

Oil falls below $39, heads for worst year ever

SINGAPORE—Oil slid below $39 a barrel on Wednesday, closing out its worst year ever after falling 69 percent, with a rapid reversal in the economic outlook having brought it crashing back from a mid-year record high. Fresh sets of dismal data from the United States on Tuesday added pessimism that oil demand in 2009 will suffer further, overturning any support from Middle East tensions and hopes for another Saudi output cut. Analysts forecast an average of $40 a barrel for US crude in the first quarter, and an average of $58.40 for next year, down $3.6 from their previous forecasts. Reuters

Thailand antigovernment protests suspended

BANGKOK—Thailand's year of almost relentless protests ended on New Year's Eve, bringing hopes of calmer political waters in 2009 as seemingly motivated demonstrators suspended their siege of Parliament. Thousands of loyalists of ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra marked away from protest sites late Tuesday after the new government outwitted them and succeeded in delivering a trial policy speech which the demonstrators had tried to prevent by surrounding the Parliament building. Instead, the lawmakers gathered quickly at the Foreign Ministry for the policy declaration before the protesters had a chance to react effectively. "We'll have a small party tonight and (begin to) after midnight so that we can take time to celebrate the New Year festival," a protest leader, Veera Musikapong, said Tuesday night. AP

B'desh polls credible, transparent, say observers

DHAKA—General elections in Bangladesh this week were "credible," monitors from the Commonwealth nations concluded Wednesday, urging rival parties to accept the result and work together. The observers said in a statement that Monday's vote, which ended two years of rule by an army-backed caretaker regime, "has been credible ... (and) the laborious and results processes were transparent." They added that "most key democratic benchmarks" had been met and that the elections represented "a crucial step" in efforts to strengthen democracy and improve governance in Bangladesh. The party of ex-Premier Sheikh Hasina Wajed won the election by a landslide margin, taking 231 of a possible 300 seats. Her rival, Khaleda Zia, who won just 27 seats, said Wednesday she did not accept the result. AFP

Defiant Blagojevich picks Obama replacement

CHICAGO—DEFYING SENIOR COLLEAGUES IN Washington and a galaxy of political leaders here, Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich of Illinois announced on Tuesday that he would fill the Senate seat of President-elect Barack Obama, which he has been accused of trying to sell.

Blagojevich said he would appoint Roland W. Burris, a former state attorney general who was the first black to win statewide office in Illinois. The decision set off a scramble of efforts to block the move by state legislators, the secretary of state, and...most significantly Democratic leaders in the US Senate who said they will not seat anyone Blagojevich chooses.

Still, even as the selection was clearly destined for the Senate's backlist on many fronts, Blagojevich sounded heavily confident as he introduced his appointee to reporters as the "next United States senator from Illinois." Having been charged earlier this month with conspiracy to commit fraud and bribery, he said the accusations against him should not taint Burris, who he called "a good and honest man."

Standing beside him, Burris, who, at 71, is seen by many here as an older statesman in Democratic politics, seemed to brush aside gaping questions about how federal criminal charges against Blagojevich might tarnish his potential Senate tenure—and whether he would really even make it to the Senate chamber in the first place.

"I'm honored that I have been appointed," Burris said, "and we will deal with the next step in the process." Of the criminal case against Blagojevich, Burris said, "I have no relationship with that situation."

Obama, who was vacationing in Hawaii and who, aides said, was surprised by the news of Burris' appointment, condemned the decision.

"Roland Burris is a good man and a fine public servant, but the Senate Democrats made it clear weeks ago that they cannot accept an appointment made by a governor who is accused of selling this very Senate seat," Obama said. NYT

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Carrie S. Martinez

BUSINESS

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CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱47.22 = $1

as of 5 p.m., Dec. 29, 2008

BSP seen to slash key rates by 50 basis pts.

By Doris C. Dumlao

AMERICAN BANKING GIANT Citigroup expects the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to slash its key interest rates by another 50 basis points this year to counter the spillover effects of a global economic downturn.

In its 2009 outlook for emerging markets, Citigroup said the local central bank's overnight borrowing rate would likely fall further to 5 percent this year from 5.5 percent at the end of December.

The BSP recently adopted a monetary easing policy given a more benign inflation outlook and the need to perk up the sagging domestic economy.

Monetary officials cite need to perk up economy

Last month, the central bank cut its overnight borrowing rate by 50 basis points. It also freed up P400 billion in additional liquidity to financiers by reducing the reserve requirement on banks by 2 percentage points.

"Bond and financial stocks from the global recession will further attack emerging markets in 2009," Citigroup said in its report.

But the bank was quick to add that "this emerging markets look less perverted due to positive terms of trade ... better-fixed positions and more effective governments."

Asian policymakers, it added, would "also act aggressively to support domestic demand."

In the case of the Philippines, Citigroup said both fiscal and monetary measures would likely be used to counter the backlash from the global financial meltdown.

It projected that the government's fiscal deficit would likely widen to 1.5 percent of gross domestic product while further monetary easing could be in effect by the second quarter of 2009.

"US recession risk is likely to underpin a sharp global downturn that would negatively impact net exports and job development revenue in 2009," Citigroup said. "However, domestic demand gains will likely be insufficient to compensate for the missing net export contribution to GDP [gross domestic product]."

The bank added that a poor consumer outlook this year would affect the current account, a key component of the balance of payments and a key measure of the underlying foreign exchange earnings of the country.

"Sentiment not likely to close to global labor market tightness," it said. "The net effect would be a current account surplus as growth eases."

But the report added that the banking system was less vulnerable to spillovers from a global recession.

"Functioning banks are crucial for the transmission of lower policy rates and liquidity easing to the broader retail and institutional credit markets," it said.

The BSP has hinted at more monetary easing in the coming year to help counteract the domestic economy and counter the effects of a global downturn.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr., in an interview with New York-based think tank Global Source, said monetary authorities next year would continue to focus on maintaining price stability while "allowing room for the economy to grow."

"The moderation of inflation risks is an opportunity for monetary policy easing amidst tightening financial conditions. This could help keep consumer spending and outlays a possible bank lending of interest rate sensitive sectors by reducing borrowing costs," Tetangco said.

The accommodative policy response would also maintain confidence in the financial markets given financial reforms which have triggered tighter credit provision," he added.

By easing key interest rates, analysts claim a favorable inflation environment, central banks tend to lower the cost of bank borrowing, thereby encouraging consumer spending and business expansion.

Gov't subsidies to state firms down 21% in 11 months

By Michelle V. Rosca

GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES TO STATE firms amounted to P54.04 billion in January to November 2008, down 21 percent from P68.92 billion in the same period the previous year.

For November alone, subsidies reached P1.05 billion, dipping 6% percent from P1.28 billion in the same month in 2007.

Finance officials said the drop in subsidies to government-owned and -controlled corporations meant that they were relying less on state support for their operations.

But it also indicated that the government also had less money to support GOCCs because it needed to increase funding for social services and development programs.

Still, officials said the financial support extended by state-owned firms was intended to make them more capable of enhancing the delivery of their services.

Data from the Department of Finance showed that the biggest recipient of state subsidies in the first 11 months of 2008 was the National Housing Authority (NHA), which got P11.76 billion.

Planned assistance to the NHA was meant to help boost the government's socialized and low-cost housing program for lower-income-earning families.

The National Food Authority (NFA) followed with P2 billion. The NFA received P1 billion in July and another P1 billion in August to shore up its capital structure. The subsidies from the government since then.

Cash subsidies for the NFA were used to beef up its capacity to import rice and sell it to the domestic market at subsidized cost.

The cash subsidies given to the NFA were on top of the rice subsidies, which it used to pay off rice and corn rice importers. The subsidies for the NFA for 2008 were estimated to reach P750 billion.

Other top recipients of state subsidies in the first 11 months of 2008 were Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (P1.46 billion), National Electrification Administration (P948 million), Social Security System (P927 million), and Land Bank of the Philippines (P720 million).

Subsidies given to the Landbank were used to fund the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program. Landbank was the one tasked to implement the program on behalf of the government.

The government has programmed to spend P71.203 billion next year as subsidies to state-owned firms, hoping the assistance will manage down to implement more prompt pricing initiatives.

This is according to the 2009 budget program prepared by the lone agency Development Budget Coordination Committee. The subsidies will form part of the proposed P1.4-trillion national budget for next year.

The National Food Authority, which has had largely on government support this year given the increase in demand and prices of rice, will be the biggest client of P4 billion from the total allocation for 2009.

Documents showed that of P4 billion will be used to funds its services, which include the sale of rice at a price much affordable than commercially sold ones.

The NHA, which requires a significant portion of the rice it sells to the public, is still seen to post trading losses next year as demand for new may continue to keep the price of imports high. The losses will be plugged by government subsidies.

2008: A year traders want to forget

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

FOR MOST ANALYSTS, THE EVENTS of 1997 that started with the collapse of the Thai baht, and which led to a full-blown financial crisis throughout East Asia, was a picnic compared to the setbacks they had had to endure in 2008.

According to these analysts, 2008 was nothing like any they have experienced in the Philippine stock market before.

"This is the worst market I've ever seen since the sharp declines in a short period of time," ING Investment Management Philippines chief investment officer Paul Joseph Gutierrez said. "I thought I've seen it all."

"It's a year I would ... forget," AB Capital Securities research head Ivor Mikko said. "It's the worst I've seen. I have not experienced the Great Depression but I have experienced the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 and I think this is much worse."

As of the last day of trading of 2008, the Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) or the 30-company blue chip barometer of the stock market had slumped 48.39 percent to 1,872.85.

In terms of market capitalization... the value of companies traded on the stock exchange—PSE-listed firms lost P3.419 trillion of their combined values, or a total of 57.9 billion. From P7.058 trillion in Dec. 29, 2007, all PSE firms are now worth only 94.800 trillion. PSE data showed.

Foreign investors, for the most part, also dumped local stocks in 2008 with net foreign selling at P47.85 billion.

Total foreign buying was pegged at P333.218 billion, while total foreign selling stood at P380.167 billion.

Average daily value turnover shrank to P5.1 billion a day, from P5.88 billion in 2007.

Among the negative factors that stabbed at investor confidence this year was the spike in prices of goods due to spiraling oil prices.

Inflation reached a 17 year high at 12.5 percent year-on-year in August before easing to 11.9 percent in September as oil prices slumped from a high of $147 per barrel.

TRADERS celebrate the last day of trading for 2008 at the Philippine Stock Exchange. According to a market analyst, "people are expecting a bad year in 2009, but it may not be as bad as 2008." AP

The demise of several financial giants in the United States like Goldman Brothers and the government bailout of AIG due to risky subprime mortgages led to severe declines in the Dow Jones Industrial Average as economists predicted that a global recession is inevitable.

The meltdown of land values peaked on Oct. 27, as stocks plummeted 12.27 percent...the biggest single-day drop in 10 years—due to widespread dumping of emerging market equities because of worries of a sharp global economic downturn.

For the first time in PSE history, trading was halted for 15 minutes, tripping the PSE's new "circuit breaker rule" set in place on Sept. 23, 2008, automatically suspending trading of shares once the PSEi drops by 10 percent.

At the height of the financial crisis, stock market analysts resorted to cracking jokes to ease their anxieties and allay fears of what could be a tougher 2009.

"People [were] just looking for-

YEARENDER

ward to the long Christmas break," noted Capital Equities Corp. trader Justine Calayuty said. "At least the market won't fall less those days[."]

"It put a smile on his clients' and friends' faces amid the bleak mood in the market today, Edwin Bacaoco, a full-time small investor, stock market agent and marketer at the 'Bible Tuesday investors' gallery,...reads them the hottest show biz news via SMS daily before giving them blow-by-blow accounts of the movements of stock indices from different regional markets.

ING Investment's Garcia said that it would not be such a remote possibility for a "bear market rally" to occur in 2009 after the severe decline in stock prices this year.

A bear market rally is a temporary increase in stock prices in the middle of a broader market downtrend.

"We think investors may look at stocks with strong cash flows amid the economic slowdown," said Garcia.

Both Garcia and Veron recommend the defensive stock sectors as safe havens for investors who continue to eschew the stock market.

These include the telecommunications sector which pay high dividends of 10 or 15 percent, and whose products are increasingly non-discretional basic needs; the power and water utility sector since they are also classified as basic needs and may benefit from potential tariff rate hikes.

Intra Invest Securities market strategist Eric Clemeño meanwhile said he is bullish on infrastructure-related stocks, since they tend to do well as government is expected to unveil huge infrastructure spending to bring down unemployment levels.

Analysts are also optimistic about a recovery in the second half of 2009 as uncertainties in global markets begin to clear up.

"[This] year is a wait- and -see [period.]," Clemeño said. "We'll likely see the market hit 2,150 to 2,300 by the end of the year."

According to Veron, economic fundamentals "haven't borrowed" but share prices may have bottomed."

"People are expecting a bad year in 2009, but it may not be as bad as 2008," Veron added.

RP considers T-bonds for OFWs

THE GOVERNMENT IS AGAIN CONSIDERing the sale of Treasury bonds for overseas Filipino workers, some of whom are losing job cuts in their places of work due to global financial crisis.

"We are looking at how we can help them so they will have investment opportunities," Assistant Treasurer Roberto Tan said.

The government early last year tapped the Land Bank of the Philippines, assisted by Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corp., to sell OFW bonds on its behalf.

The bonds were only sold to workers in Hong Kong. The government was not able to sell bonds to workers in other countries, such as those in the Middle East, as it originally planned.

This is the reason why the government is considering another OFW bond float this year, Tan said.

The bonds sold in Hong Kong last year were denominated in pesos. The said foreign bonds denominated in foreign currencies would require the Philippine government to comply with various requirements by foreign regulators.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas urged the government to sell bonds specifically meant for OFWs. One of the BSP's advantages is to help OFWs become more investment savvy to secure their future any risks.

The jobs of overseas Filipinos are being threatened as the economies of the United States and parts of Europe are expected to contract this year. The BSP earlier said OFWs needed to learn how to invest properly so they would be prepared for any unwanted seasonal woes.

The BSP also said it hoped the sale of OFW bonds would entice more Filipinos working abroad to park their excess money in Philippine securities as a way to help boost the domestic capital markets.

Landbank estimates said that, for every dollar earned by an OFW, 65 cents are saved in the host country and not invested in the Philippines. Michelle V. Rosca

Weak demand halts plant expansion in Carmelray

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

TRANS-ASIA OIL & ENERGY DEvelopment Corp. said it is suspending the expansion of a bunker-fired power plant in Carmelray Industrial Park II in Laguna province.

In a disclosure, Trans-Asia Oil senior vice president for finance Francisco Ronquillo cited the following reasons for the move: the projected increase in demand for electricity based on projected growth in number and size of industrial users or locators failed to materialize; the significant drop in demand for electricity brought about by adverse effects of the US recession on the locators whose major customers are in the US; and the fuel price risks which most of its subsidiary's users are not willing to share with the company.

Trans-Asia Oil completed its rights offer and listing of 802.32 million new shares last year. Based on the use of proceeds from the rights offer, some P858.6 million was intended to finance the expansion of a 21-megawatt bunker-fired power plant in Carmelray of the company's subsidiary CIP II Power Corp. (CIPP). Under the work program approved by the PSE, the said amount was slated to be used by 2008.

Trans-Asia said it will determine by the first quarter of 2009 whether to proceed with the plant expansion.

CIPP power plant in Calamba, Laguna, supplies power to 44 industrial users in the Carmelray Industrial Park, which include manufacturers of high-end electronic, computer and automobile parts.

The power plant has reached its peak load capacity of 14 MW. CIPP earlier projected that electricity demand in the economic zone will increase, driven by the growth in the number of locators. To meet this expected growth in demand, CIPP had planned to increase its power generation capacity by 15 MW by installing additional power generating sets.

Per its petroleum exploration projects, Trans-Asia Oil is also a co-contractor to four petroleum service contracts with the Philippine government, some of which are located in eastern Visayas and Western Palawan. Trans-Asia Oil is a part of the Phinma Group.

Trans-Asia cites adverse effects of US recession

MORE TREATS
BDO and DH, in partnership with the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Owwa), gave special homecoming treats to arriving overseas Filipinos last Dec. 13-24. Enjoying a glass of milk are (from left) Owwa Administrator Mac Dimeo, Labor Secretary Marianito Roque, BDO chair Teresita Sy and himself (L-Data) Jr., head of BDO transaction banking group

COA set to complete Meralco audit

By Abigail L. Ho

THE ONGOING SCRUTINY OF THE Lopez-led Manila Electric Co.'s books should be done by February, with the Commission on Audit soon conducting the review now on the last leg of its work.

In a briefing, Meralco vice president Leonardo Mañosa said the distribution utility had submitted final requirements to the COA audit team last Dec. 24.

"Last Dec. 15, all the auditors went back to base. But they're on the last part of the audit now so we expect them to finish by February," he said.

Meralco in September finally agreed to have the COA scrutinize its books, following an Energy Regulatory Commission directive for it to do so.

The audit, which would cover 2004-2007, would entail full scrutiny of Meralco books, records and accounts "to see to it that the rate increases that Meralco has asked for are reasonable and justified."

Procurement outsourcing new growth area for RP

By Ronnel W. Domingo

HOMEGROWN ITEM TRANSpower Corp. expects brisk business ahead as global companies turn to procurement outsourcing (PO) to cut down costs amid the spreading economic downturn.

Charlie Villaseñor, company president and chief executive, said PO was on the rise, citing industry forecast that the business will have the highest compounded annual growth rate in the next five years.

Data from the 2007 Black Book on Procurement Outsourcing showed that PO was projected to post a CAGR of 25 percent over the period.

Transpower is a pioneering company that delivers end-to-end procurement solutions to major local and international clients like San Miguel, JP Morgan Chase, Motorola, Bayer de Oro, Ali Wassiyang and Petron.

Transpower says that its backbone is an all-Filipino staff and that everything it is selling is "purely locally generated" unlike other IT-based firms with foreign funding.

"As companies feel the pinch of the global economic slowdown, they are more compelled to outsource procurement services," Villaseñor said. "Procurement service providers have the domain expertise to manage the core side of the business and deliver strategic spend management solutions."

Aside from cost advantages, he said Transpower had partnered with software firm Oracle in delivering procurement, sourcing and contract management tools as a service, meaning companies can have the tools and Transpower's services managing the system without their budget-without doing any large up-front investments.

Villaseñor said that aside from PO, emerging opportunities were also likely in the areas of finance, human resources services, design and engineering.

Dismal holiday sales hurt malls

NEW YORK—THE DISMAL HOLIday shopping season may sink some retailers and could take down some US malls struggling with rising vacancies, softening rents and their own large debt loads.

"This is probably going to go down as the worst season in history as far as retail sales," said Victor Calanog, director of research for real estate research firm Reis Inc. "The difficulty of understanding what the effect would be at the property level is because we're already heading toward a train wreck."

Store closings

At the end of October, the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) forecast that national chains would announce 6,300 store closings in 2008 and 5,300 in the first half of 2009.

That was before stores such as Circuit City Stores Inc. and KB Toys Inc. filed for bankruptcy.

But factoring in store-by-store and other closings announced so far by the US Census Bureau, ICSC predicted 148,000 retail stores would close in 2008 and 73,000 would do so in the first half of 2009.

Fall in sales

During this holiday season until Christmas, retail chains, which are among the best bankable mall tenants, saw apparel sales fall 16.7 percent, according to SpendingPulse, which tracks holiday sales. Electronics and appliances chains sales dropped 26.7 percent, and luxury goods plummeted 34.5 percent.

A general rule of thumb is that a mall can stay afloat if 30 to 40 percent of its tenants remain in business, Calanog said. But that percentage will have to be higher to sustain those malls that are burdened with debt, such as General Growth Properties Inc., the No. 2 US mall owner.

"The leverage is what's going to kill them," said Ben Wilkerson, chief executive of Property & Portfolio Research.

That means that some malls will be grappling with low income while facing expensive debt costs.

Reis forecasts that the fourth-quarter mall vacancy rate could top 7 percent, the highest since Reis began tracking regional mall performance in the start of 2000. It saw fourth quarter mall rents falling by 0.1 to 0.4 percent.

All retail properties, not just large malls, may see their rents fall by an average of 1.5 percent in 2008 and 5.5 percent in 2009, according to Property & Portfolio Research.

Concessions

The research firm tracks "economic vacancy," or the amount of retail space that surpasses the amount that sales can support. Economic vacancy now stands at about 11.5 percent and is expected to peak at 17.1 percent in the third quarter of 2009, "implying that one out of every six square feet needs to just go away," Pollaro said.

"In lieu of the impending crunch, mall owners may have to rethink their mix of customers by adding service-oriented stores to luxury malls and help their existing tenants.

"As the recession drags on, there is perhaps a greater likelihood that landlords will see some concessions if it keeps the tenant out of bankruptcy" (IMG) Capital Markets analyst Neil Mitchum said. Reuters

BUSINESS

Renewable Energy Act IRR ready by June, says DOE

60-percent energy self-sufficiency by 2010 eyed

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE) aims to complete the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) that will govern Republic Act 9513, or the Renewable Energy Act of 2008, by June.

Maria Maricapas, director of the utilization and management bureau of the department, said much work was being done to finalize the IRR at the soonest possible time.

According to the DOE's 2008 accomplishment report, the IRR should be in place within the first half of 2009, most likely by June.

Industry players believe the RE Law will help enable the country to achieve 60-percent self-sufficiency in energy by 2010.

Former Energy Secretary Vicente Perez, who now heads consultancy firm Merrill Horizon and renewable energy company Alternergy, said the RE Law would pave the way for the greater use of indigenous and renewable resources in producing energy in the country.

As of 2007, the country's energy self-sufficiency level had risen to 57 percent from 43 percent in 2000.

"The Renewable Energy Act is the first and most comprehensive RE legislation in Southeast Asia. [It] provides a generous package of fiscal and non-fiscal incentives that will surely accelerate growth of the industry. The newly signed law also sets clear policy directions for RE development to ensure its long-term sustainability," he said in a statement.

Some of the incentives contained in the RE Law are exemption from tariffs and zero-rated value-added tax on the importation of machinery and equipment for the first 10 years of an operating contract, as well as tax credit on domestic capital equipment and services.

Special tax rates will also be imposed on equipment and machinery to be used for renewable energy development. An income tax holiday will be granted to potential investors for the first seven years of commercial operations.

Carbon credits to be derived from renewable energy projects will likewise be tax-free.

Philippine Independent Power Producers Association president Ernesto Pantangco said the RE Law would spur more investments in the renewable energy sector, particularly in the areas of wind, solar and geothermal.

"This is a welcome development not only for the industry but for the country as well. It is a step in the right direction, especially with the government's thrust to become more energy self-sufficient, while at the same time accelerating the development of indigenous renewable energy resources," he said.

STABLE PRICES, AVAILABLE SUPPLY Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap visits the Plaza ng Pasig public market in Pasig City to ensure the supply and stability of the prices of basic food commodities, particularly vegetables, during the holidays.

ODAs down by 18.6% to $7.9B in H1

THE TOTAL OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT assistance tapped by the country in the first semester of 2008 declined by 18.6 percent to $7.9 billion from $9.7 billion in the same period a year ago, according to a report from the National Economic and Development Authority's Project Monitoring Staff.

The Japanese government, through the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, remained the biggest source of ODA loans in the first six months of 2008 contributing $3.43 billion, or 44 percent of the total ODA. Other funding sources during the period were the Asian Development Bank, $1.13 billion; China, $1.11 billion; World Bank, $1.08 billion, and others accounting the $1.10 billion.

"Out of the 183 active programs and projects, 85 loans worth $8.3 billion are ongoing, 12 have been closed with a total commitments of $952 million, one has been cancelled (Northern Luzon Wind Power Project) and the remaining five (coming some $766 million) have been recently signed and became effective in the first semester," Neda-PMS Director Roderick M. Planta said in a memorandum to Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and Neda Director-General Ralph G. Recto.

The Neda-PMS said the government disbursed during the period $414.4 million from both ODA programs and project loans, down 39 percent from $1.01 billion a year ago.

Disbursements for project loans plunged by 90 percent to $52 million from $504 million a year ago. Disbursements for project loans dropped by 29 percent to $362 million from $506 million in 2007.

"The significant decrease was attributed to the low disbursement performance of projects due to shedding portfolio and the zero disbursements for the project loans funded by ODA-JBIC Europe for China, all heading to situations registered lower disbursements levels in the first semester of 2008 compared to the same period last year," Planta said.

Implementing agencies hit a disbursement level equivalent to 79 percent of the target for projects supported by ODA. This was three percentage points higher than the 76 percent disbursement rate in the first semester of 2007.

Asian Development Bank's highest disbursement rate at 144 percent; World Bank, 99 percent; GOJ-JBIC, 88 percent; China, 13 percent and others, 61 percent.

According to the Neda-PMS, the budget-dependent projects' disbursement target for the first semesters of 2008 was $268 million. It met 74 percent of this amount was already disbursed ($249 million). For the non-budget-dependent projects, the disbursement target for the period was $155 million, of which $143 million or 93 percent was already disbursed.

Budget-dependent projects are those implemented by government agencies dependent on the national budget, while non-budget dependent projects are those undertaken by government-owned and controlled corporations and government financial institutions. Fifty-nine out of the 183 projects and project loans had disbursement rates below 50 percent, it added.

Pacific Pearl seeks flights to Indonesia

By Rita T. Olchondra

NEW AIRLINE PACIFIC PEARL AIRWAYS (PPA) Corp. is targeting flights to Indonesia.

The company has filed with the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) an application for designation as official Philippine carrier in Manado, Indonesia. Pursuant to the country's bilateral memorandum of agreement between the Philippines and Indonesia, Manila Pearl did not offer more details on its plans for Indonesia.

In November 2007, at the latest BIMP-EAGA meeting between ASEAN member nations, an Air Pact was inched between the BIMP (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines) region, with Manila Pearl Airways expected to begin flights immediately to the BIMP-EAGA region.

The region is home to 40 million people.

Pacific Pearl Airways is based in Subic and has flights to and from Manila, Clark, Bohol, Iloilo, Palawan and South Korea.

The company has two Boeing 737-300 aircraft, each with a seating capacity of around 112 to 116.

Sustainable farming gets boost from PCB

THE LOCAL COFFEE INDUSTRY—one of the most vibrant segments of the agriculture sector—severely wants its support behind the policies espoused by Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Philippines.

In a statement, Rudy Villaluna of the Philippine Coffee Board said his organization "strongly believes in the idea of promoting coffee farmers' livelihood programs, and encourages land, soil and water conservation.

"The aim of SAI is noble, and if the private sector, government agencies and non-government organizations can come together to work towards this ideal, not only in the agricultural sector gaining from it, but the entire country as well," Villaluna said.

SAI aims to raise and communicate to relevant audiences the need for a sustainable agriculture platform; manage knowledge on sustainable agriculture practices; identify and involve stakeholders like farmers, consumers and food manufacturers, and support the implementation of sustainable agriculture practices.

These programs were all geared toward SAI's goals of promoting practices and systems that help preserve the future availability of current resources and enhance their efficiency.

It also aims to improve the quality, safety and nutritional value of agricultural products, helps improve farmers' productivity and profitability, and encourages land, soil and water conservation.

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BSP opens financial education center this month

By Doris C. Dumlao

AN INTERACTIVE EDUTOP SHOP FOR economic and financial education run by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) will open its doors to the public this month.

The Economic and Financial Learning Center (EFLC), one of the central bank's biggest programs in its financial literacy crusade, was launched in October and will be fully operational this year.

"The launching of the EFLC symbolizes BSP's commitment to institutionalize and sustain a comprehensive financial education program for Filipinos," former Finance Secretary and now Monetary Board member Jesus Antonio said in a recent financial literacy summit in Cebu.

The EFLC is a one-stop center where researchers, students, visitors and BSP staff may access data and information produced and acquired by the BSP in the areas of central banking, economics and finance. It integrates modern technology by providing information through conventional books and magazines, multimedia formats such as CDs, digitized books and interactive learning modules.

"Through the interactive modes of learning, including computer-based games and audio-visual learning tools, we hope that knowledge will be more easily acquired and become more exciting for students," Antonio said.

The center will also consolidate materials on economic and financial education programs undertaken by various departments of the central bank, including digital archives of BSP video materials to make them more accessible to the public.

Assuming said financial education is crucial for a population that has been traditionally underserved by the financial system, making them more vulnerable to making uninformed financial decisions.

"The financial landscape we are in today is much more complicated than ever," Antonio said. "As a result, financial literacy has become not just a matter of convenience but an essential tool for ordinary people to cope with normal and abnormal fluctuations in economic activity."

He noted that lack of financial knowledge would lead to poor financial choices which could be harmful, not only to the individuals concerned, but to the nation at large.

"Regrettably, low financial literacy [that] lack basic financial literacy are the most vulnerable in sudden economic shocks. This, in turn, may have significant implications on social dynamics. I believe that through financial education, we can change financial behavior for the better, and ultimately save social and economic lives," the official said.

The other steps taken by the BSP to contribute to better financial literacy are the following:

- Through a partnership with our Department of Education, it has developed teaching guides and pilot tested them in nine regions around the country.
- It has conducted financial literacy campaigns for overseas Filipinos and their families to inform them of alternative uses of their dollar remittances, including savings, investments in financial products and business ventures as well as to familiarize OFWs with the consumer laws and BSP issuances relating to consumer protection.
- It has also conducted a financial education program for microfinance clients.

Bid to reimpose feed wheat tariff junked

By Jerry E. Esplanada

THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT has denied the request of local corn farmers to reimpose the tariff on feed wheat imports, saying that the move will not help the industry which the government earlier lifting it will remain in effect until May, or six months after it was issued.

In a letter dated Dec. 8, Presidential Assistant, OIC of the Office of the Agriculture Undersecretary for Policy and Planning, told the Philippine Maize Federation Inc. (Philmaize) that the 10 No. 2/5 would only be reviewed after the six-month effectivity period.

In November 2008, President Macapagal-Arroyo signed the order, which lifted the tariff on feed wheat and if four other orders to enable it to ride out economic downturns, maintain a healthy balance sheet and take advantage of opportunities.

Virtucio said Ayala Land overdelivered the challenges of 2008, from a turnover year in 2007 and continued bullish construction in 2008.

It received the 2008 Best Overall Developer in the Philippines award from Euromoney Institutional Investor.

"While we already warned leading the impact of the subprime crisis in the US in the first quarter, we still registered a creditable performance with revenue up 17 percent and net income up by 23 percent in the last three quarters of this year although were not saying Ayala Land is completely insulated from the negative effects of the global financial crisis, we are confident we will be able to weather this crisis and even emerge stronger as a company at the end of the cycle," Yuseco said.

"All projects that have been launched will be completed as committed," he said.

Ayala Land president James L. Ayala earlier said the company would likely end this year with capital expenditures of P30 billion. Although P6 billion less than what it earlier planned to spend for the year, it was still the biggest among developers.

Yuseco also said that, similar to its conduct in previous times of economic strife, Ayala Land would continue its stateline investor transparency and openness in dealing with its investors, customers and suppliers.

"It's not going to be a perfect journey and there are many challenges ahead but certainly, during these times, we will make sure we step up our efforts in serving and protecting the interest of all our key stakeholders, including our valued employees," he said.

Ayala Land sees steady cash flow next year

AYALA LAND IS PROJECTING A steady cash flow next year not only from shopping centers and office leasing but also from continued property development, as it expands its footprint in the UPW groups in Europe, the Middle East and even in the United States.

James L. Yuseco, Ayala Land senior vice president and CFO, said the company had traditionally banked on its diversified portfolio of businesses to enable it to ride out economic downturns, maintain a healthy balance sheet and take advantage of opportunities.

Editor Thelma Simon San Juan

LIFESTYLE Food

Terrine, cheese fondue and 'kare-kareng bagnet'

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

If there is one reason I wish the holiday season can go on and on, it is so that I could continue enjoying the magnificence of Chone Bizon's Holiday Terrine of Foie with Gingerbread.

It is terrine like no other—three layers of gingerbread between foie. The gingerbread certainly saves a collection traditional terrine into a sensational sandwich.

The sugar and spice counterpoint the liver, subtly masking its bitterness. It was quite a hefty portion but my palate didn't care of it. One order wasn't enough. But there is more to Chone Bizon than just foie.

Chef Othmar Frei

According to Chef Othmar Frei, Chone Bizon was built solely to serve what is traditionally Swiss. Most of their ingredients are imported from Switzerland.

Even their wines are Swiss, which make great topics for conversation.

During my visit, Andreas Meister, the restaurant's very able assistant manager, himself Swiss and single (calling all single ladies in their 30s and 40s), decanted excellent Swiss wines.

Both white (Dezor Sophoclis "Petit Merveille" 2007, from Swiss chocolate grapes. The vineyards of St. Saphorin are part of the vineyard terraces of Lavaux on Lake Geneva) and red (Pinot Noir Marsigny 2006 from Swiss Murugg, town of Visach in the eastern part of Switzerland), were sublime.

Nice, light, crisp, so easy to drink; goes down like water, no heaviness.

Cheese fondue

Would it be genuinely Swiss without fondue? Never!

At Chone Bizon, the choices are endless. The fondue connoisseurs will keep you coming back for more.

There is of course, the traditional Cheese Fondue—gruyere, emmenthal, white wine, garlic and black pepper—the base for a medley of many fondues such as Meilleur Tomatoes, with tomato sauce, capers, majoram and oregano; Garlic, with cashew flavored with risotto; Cheeses, with schwinger (a type of green hard Swiss cheese); Pilz, flavored with sliced forest mushrooms; Williams, flavored with pear Williams; Asiatique and fresh pesto.

CHEF Othmar Frei

And if the terrine, fondues and wine are not enough, there is the excellent Black bread; Teller (a platter of thinly sliced air dried meat delicacies from Grisons); cochette; schabziger, read with cured potatoes; Swiss chocolates sausage and fondue; sausages chanelle; nightschnebli (apple fritter) with vanilla sauce); Eidher Lux (Swiss traditional coffee made with pear schnapps); digestifs; even the Rosenzer (Swiss cigars). All these served amid Swiss chalet interiors make for a truly sumptuous, dining experience.

Chone Bizon (7321 Yakal Street, San Antonio Village, Makati; tel. 8437588) is the best of Switzerland on a plate.

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

Pino's chef Edward Bugia

Good food could be had just about anywhere!

From the Swiss Alps to UP Village, it's food nirvana

PINO'S chef Edward Bugia

From the Swiss Alps to 122 Maginhawa St., UP Village, QC.

Chef Edward Bugia is the owner of Pino Bar and Restaurant (tel. 0915.5116842, 0920.9227614). He is also the associate chief instructor in the Culinary Baking and Pastry Program in Global Culinary and Hospitality Academy.

Bugia's food is a tribute to his roots. He says, "My partners and I are proud of our local delicacies—bagnet, lapu, longganisa, etc. We want to highlight them in our dishes and let our guests taste the difference."

"We don't like pretentious food. We don't want to serve dishes that are too complicated to eat. We want our guests to easily appreciate the flavors. We strive to be different. So we give much of our dishes our very own, unique Pino twist."

I paid Bugia a visit lately and had his slurp-darning bagnet. The observation is superlative!

Imagine crispy chunks of homemade bagnet laid over kare-kare sauce that is just so delicious, served with achara and bagoong rice.

The moment I managed to fill my belt with every component of the dish, I ingested it and say God, fantastic!

Imagine the crunchy bagnet plus the sheer euphoria felt with each bite of perfectly fried pork...the sinful piece of fat kills us but flirt, gives us a taste of heaven!

There the sauce kicks in...the peanuts, shortly thereafter, slight hints of sweetness, then saltiness from the bagoong rice, imitate from the ushered all those wonderful flavors from something as simple as kare-kare!

This is what definitions food is all about—the heightening of the senses, the coming alive of every taste bud receptor that makes you go instinct! It is so good! My links leave me feeling stimulus in a while!

Other interesting Bugia creations are Crispy Tenderloin Tapsilog, Pino-Chicken bacsil served with mashed sweet potatoes, to name a few.

Unfortunately, I have but one stomach to fill. That evening at Pino, this stomach was in gustatory ecstasy.

My new class schedules are out. I am also offering Wine and Light—After the Holidays Cooking Series. Call 9286298 or 09189237246.

E-mail the author at reggieas@inquirer.com.ph

RP cuisine raised the bar in 2008

By Margie Baga-Reyes

YEAR 2008 WAS A TRAILBLAZER IN THE local culinary scene...from a world-class Filipino cookbook launched to standardize food preparation and presentation, to an amazing artwork by Filipino cake artists that replicated feelings'd Bird Nest Stadium, the tsunami-wards were big, ambitious, fresh.

A yiddle in Pinoy gastronomy. The launch of "Sinlaranyan: A Guide to Philippine Cuisine" made every Filipino proud of Philippine cooking. It took nearly three years to complete the book, after numerous kitchen workings and tastings. The book has quickly become a bestseller, judging from the new batch of reprints within two months from the book's launch.

A battalion of this twenty chair their Magnanny Ho, the book was conceived with six of the country's most prominent chefs—Glenda Barretto, Claudia Reyes, Margarita Fores, Conrad Ginzburg, Jessie Sincioco and Myrna Segismundo—undertaking the challenge of identifying best practices in the preparation and presentation of traditional recipes.

The book was edited by Inquirer columnist Micky Penia, photographed by Noel Quintana, graphic designed by Ige Ramos and food styled also by Reyes.

"Sinlaranyan" definitely sets a benchmark to the preparation and presentation of Philippine food to the world—covering at least 60 dishes including adobo, pochero, bakasi and kare-kare.

Anthony Bourdain didn't eat bukot in Manila. Manila was greeted by the "Kitchen Confidential," "The Story Site" and "A Cook's Tour" author Anthony Bourdain who sampled the flavors and ambience of Farmer's Market in Cubao, QC, and enjoyed the goodies of Racidel, Pampanga, and Cebu.

He was in town to film the first Philippine episode of "No Reservations," his tongue-in-cheek travel-slash-food show on Discovery Travel & Living. But he skipped eating balut, dean he had already tried it in Vietnam and in Quezon, New York, several times.

Among his local guides were Ivan Man Dy of the Binondo Food Walk, chef/artist Reyng of Bale Dutung and food blogger Marbourdaisa of Marketmanila.com.

He toured nearby Bale Dutung, enjoying our very own pork sisig, of which he reportedly said: "Tastes than to just delicious. Sisig is

Anthony Bourdain skipped eating 'balut,' but raved about 'sisig'

AP CASSIMI CO

DARWIN — BY JIM DAVIS

A LUPIN — BY JESS ABRERA

PUGAD BABOY — BY PH. GARCIA

DICK TRACY

ADVENTURES — BY ELIZABETH CHOMKO

JAMES BOND — BY [illegible]

DIVINE COMEDY — BY STEVEN RAMBLING

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

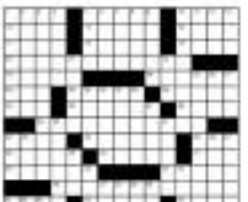
ATOMO AND WEEDY — BY DAN GARCILLANO

TULBOK — BY MARK COLL

KIKO MACHINE — BY MARK ABRERA

BEN — BY DARNELL RELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

THIS NEW YEAR'S: You're imaginative, very diplomatic and personable in situations and relationships. You're highly responsible, practical, prudent, methodical, business and little conscious and you excel in things involving detail. You're very sensitive to criticism. You need to learn to take yourself too seriously. You're also a bit too critical. You're a perfectionist. You're a natural leader. You're also a bit too critical. You're a perfectionist. You're a natural leader. You're also a bit too critical. You're a perfectionist. You're a natural leader

Healthy veggie dishes after the holiday pig-out

Tour of Northern Luzon brings us to gardens and farms off the beaten track, with the freshest produce

Text and photos by Irene C. Perez

HAVE YOU FEASTED OR TOO RICH and heavy dishes over the holidays? Go fresh. Have a spread of healthy veggie dishes that is friendly to your diet and your budget.

"Vegetable dishes don't have to be boring," says Mona Sita Grant, manager for Mellini. "We can upgrade the quality of ordinary veggie dishes through taste and variety."

Mona Sita took media on a recent three-day Northern Luzon food tour of the "No. my palay ng bayan mo" campaign, to attend to rediscover the uses and sources of local vegetables so that they may serve as better alternatives to meat.

"GREEN rows." Endless rows of iceberg lettuce on Mt. Data in Mountain Province

Herb farm

Mini stop was Tonay Buna, a lovely, rustic garden restaurant.

Tucked away along the highways of La Trinidad, Benguet, it's a big farm not easily noticed behind the roadside pine gates. It is a plantation of various herbs, like lemongrass, mint tarragon and thyme.

"Tonay Buna is a community-based farm where visitors can actually see and feel what farming here is all about," said manager Laurel Contreras Sto. Tomas.

We were served a refreshing garden salad with lumpiang sariwa, tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce and edible flowers, drizzled with light Mona Sita vinegar and spices, pork lumpia and chicken barbecue eaten with Mona Sita BBQ marinade, and mango-ampalaya-tofu-whipped cream.

BBQ,BQ Vegetable Salad

The organic farm is open to educational groups. It's great for family gatherings and romantic dates.

Herbed vinegars, salad dressings, coffee, panoramic pines are sold in the charming gift shop. It is open daily, 8 a.m. 6 p.m., by reservation (e-mail bing_benguet@yahoo.com).

Cordillera highlands

Times are hard and prices are up, but that doesn't mean we have to scrimp on good food.

"We are focusing on going because households are trying to save. We want to show you where the best products are born, from the organic Kordilyera," said Mellini.

As we drove all the way to the Cordillera highlands—zigzag trail and area visibility from big mountainsides—to Mt. Data Hotel in Sagada, Mountain Province.

Along the way, we passed by the Philippine Pull, the highest point in the Philippine Highway System at 7,400 feet above sea level.

It was freezing, but the sumptuous dinner more than made up for the harsh weather. We had all-free lumpiang halbal with brown sauce, grilled chicken halah, hilaw na puso, hilaw na utak and chopped cinnamon, and a selection of local sweets for dessert. Sita Mona Sita, peanut brittle, choco flakes in dark and white chocolates.

Most people are getting food-conscious, said Mellini. And Mona Sita is proud that its products are made of all-natural ingredients, have no preservatives, no steroids, no MSG.

"Our advocacy is for people to trust the labels. We are educating the public on what to eat. They need to think buying realistic, working fast. May well spot! But now people are more open," he said.

The Mona Sita Oyster sauce is the best-seller among its products. Traditionally, it's been used with Chinese beef dishes. It's now used with tilapia, chicken and veggies.

Lettuce land

The next morning the group trekked to Mt. Data to see the lettuce plantations on the mountains. There were rows and lines of crisp iceberg lettuce ready for harvest. All around us were wild trumpet flowers, calla lilies, and hydrangeas enough to make hundreds of bouquets. The frosty weather made for the perfect environment for these plants to flourish.

We chopped by Purdi Glenn Crops Farm, a half-hectare-covered farm in Sitio Purdi, Barangay Mountain Star, where we were given an overview of lettuce farming. Potassium lettuce is harvested 45 days after planting and transported to Baguio, Tagaytay or Manila where it is consumed only cold.

Beach fiesta

Another long drive later found us at China Sea Resort in Bauang, La Union, where we were treated to a superb dinner. On the menu were stir-fried bell peppers, carrot shaft prawns, beef with mushrooms, steamed fish with oyster sauce, king crab sauvignon.

Mona Sita has a team of chefs that makes recipes. The team recommends the Mona Sita's Ping-Gun Mix made of pure chicken extract and chili powder especially for veggie dishes even kids would love.

We capped off the tour with lunch at Island Room in Urdaneta, Pangasinan, where we were delighted with a set of farm-to-table dishes to complement the environment.

Mona Sita is sold in over 30 countries. The US is the biggest market, followed by the Middle East, Europe, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

"Wherever you're from," said Mellini. "We have high demand for the barbecue marinade, adobong, shrimp sauce, pickled and tomato sauce."

In keeping with its "Masarap Samp, Natural sa Sangkap" vision, Mellini and Mona Sita (http://www.mona.com) will never get a celebrity endorser or place TV ads. It will instead reach buyers through promos and tap user markets and user-user stores.

RECIPES

Here are some healthy recipes for after the holiday binge.

Buttered Vegetable Salad

2 tbsp Mona Sita's Coconut Nectar Vinegar
1 pc red onion, thinly sliced
½ tsp white sugar
Pinch of ground black pepper
2 tbsp olive oil
2 pc fresh carrots, shredded
8 pc Baguio beans, blanched and cut into thin diagonal slices
1 tbsp candied pili nuts, chopped
In a medium stainless steel bowl, combine Coconut Nectar Vinegar and sliced onions. Let it stand for 5 minutes.

Add the sugar, olive oil and season with the salt and pepper. Stir well.

Add the carrots and Baguio beans. Toss to blend.

Serve with chopped candied pili nuts.

Makes 2-4 servings.

Grilled Chicken Kebab

½ kilo boneless chicken thigh
1 pouch Ping-Gun Mix
1 pc red bell pepper, cut into cubes
1 pc green bell pepper, cut into cubes
2 pc red onions, cut into cubes
1/3 pc bamboo barbecue sticks soaked in water
½ c oyster sauce, for basting
Preheat grill. Thread 2 pieces of green bell pepper, 2 pieces red bell pepper, 3 pieces chicken and 1 piece red onion on each of 10 sticks. Arrange skewers on grill.

Grill over medium-hot coals until chicken is completely cooked, about 3 minutes on each side.

Baste each barbecue with Oyster Sauce just before serving.

Makes 10 kebabs.

Oil-free Lumpiang Halabi

½ c halabi
1 pc singkamas, cut into thin strips
½ c hamonado, cut into thin strips
2 tbsp carrots, cut into thin strips
1 pc green beans, thinly sliced diagonally
1 c cabbage, cut into thin strips
1 pouch Ping-Gun Mix
1 tbsp ketchup
Lumpia sauce:
½ c brown sugar
2 c water
2 tbsp soy sauce
Pinch of salt

PHOTO salad at Tonay Farm in La Trinidad

4 tbsp cornstarch, dissolved in ¼ c water
2 tbsp chopped toasted peanuts
1 tbsp cooked garlic

In a wok, combine water and singkamas. Bring to a boil and steam until half-cooked. Add the rest of the ingredients and Ping-Gun Mix and stir well. Cover and cook briskly until the vegetables are tender.

Serve hot with lumpia sauce topped with chopped garlic and chopped toasted peanuts.

Lumpia sauce:

In a small pan, caramelize sugar until it turns dark amber in color. Add water and stir until sugar has dissolved. Add salt and soy sauce. Add the dissolved cornstarch and bring to a boil. Cook until sauce thickens.

Serve with Lumpiang Halabi and sprinkle chopped garlic and toasted peanuts.

Makes 10 servings.

Curry and Worcestershire sauce, 'balut' and 'bagoong'

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Amir

AFTER THAT MOMY BLAST of fireworks last night, let's usher in the New Year with some quiet reading.

Teddy Boy Locsin gave me a gift that was wrapped beautifully but which he unwrapped himself because he couldn't wait for me to see what he had bought for me. "Raising Indias" is by Cherrie Atilano, an award-winning author who lives in Boston but writes about the cooking of her mother-in-law. She has written several books but an invitation to a wedding brought her back to her Bengal hometown to relive regional fare. Kerala, Amritsar, Lucknow, Mumbai, Bombay and Kerala to research stews and pseudo-stews and broth. Like many food writers, she touches on history, tradition, culture in every recipe, a delicious mixture of ingredients and methods in cooking. And she makes an interesting point that Indian cuisine is always evolving, it rarely stays the same for other cuisines. The adobo, for instance, didn't use to have soy sauce, before this. Manila told me, slow the soy was added in the mid! of research certainly, but having an author like Raneep swim it will make for an interesting story.

"Raising India" joins the other India books by my bed. I still haven't finished "Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors" by Lizzie Collingham but at least I've read far enough to know how curry powder and Worcestershire sauce came to be. I've read several chapters of "The Kid at the Table" by Daniel Boston, a book that caught my eye at the Boston Museum shop. And while not strictly a food book, Tina Modotti's family brings me with him on his travels to the subcontinent in "The Heart of a Thousand Colonies."

Art of wrapping

"Wrap Smart Pinoy Style: The Filipino Way" gives to the why and how of food we may be curious about but never asked. Marilen Tolentino Espiritu tells us the story of tender lechugan and puso, balut and "ditis" on onions, bagong Bataysa and kuong pasi. That couldn't have been effective without the pictures that show the wrapping, the artwork of food carving and pretilla wrapper cooking done by her son, Johann. According to Marilen, such artful packaging is disappearing so documentary that it was a must for her. The cover already invites participating since it features small round containers of sardine bolongot made of fruit shell mixed with red pepper, a few bold ingredients by bamboo sticks and locked together with bamboo ribbon.

The last week's column I mentioned that many people are quietly cooking to document our culinary traditions. Marilen Espiritu is one of those small cooks she intends to keep doing that. Entering that New Year of the book it is the stories even of cooks in her notes.

And what a surprise to find "Secret Ingredients" hidden by so many recipe books, tucked away on the lowest rung of a shelf in a bookstore. It wouldn't have attracted me if it didn't have the subhead "The New Yorker to Think of Food and Drink" and the cover sporting the familiar New Yorker style of graphic art. The story first born on "The Menu" on the back flap was irresistible. It said: "Woody Allen on dieting, the Dostoevsky way." I just had to have it.

However, I've only gotten as far as the introduction of David Remnick, the editor. He tells the story of "reading authors Harold Ross whom he described as "grammatically challenged," a more literary way of saying he had shots. His successor, William Shawn, was healthier but ate very little. Despite their eccentricities, "good editing," they parted the way for the New Yorker to contain the best articles on food, some of which were written by my favorites like MFK Fisher, Calvin Trillin and AJ Liebling.

As I read through "The Menu" again, I can see only three three writers in the entire lot. I'm also looking forward to reading Dorothy Parker on dinner conversation, Steve Martin on mnemonics and John Cheever on the nuisances of gin.

It should be a good year for reading.

E-mail: pinoyfood04@yahoo.com

From Filipino cuisine to German meals

EATING INDEX

Poor

Good

Excellent

WE WISH YOU A HIGH FULFILLING holiday season. When all the frenzy is over, you might want to enjoy a meal in either of the three outlets we visited previously. One is in Sorsogon, others in Malolos/Filipino cuisine (the second is at so as innovative; and the third has gained good reputation for years and has kept its faithful clientele.

Portico 1771

On the ground floor of Investita, 11th Street, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig, tel. no. 8768541. This customer-friendly restaurant has gone much more casual. Not a spill-over crowd, tables and chairs are set at fewer. This is another outlet by the younger generation of the Bayot Culinary conglomerate.

Dining area: Bright, friendly, kitchen are done in cool white and yellow. Air-conditioning system is working well. Minimal noise.

Staff: One more guests in the entrance. The rest are quick to offer the menu and personal attention is felt.

Service: Orders are taken the moment one settles down. Food comes fast and hot is hot, cold is on the mop and drink is cold.

Suggested food: Start with Spring Rolls (P320), tender of tofu with spring onion, tempura and honey ginger sauce. Grilling is very generous. Then go for Lentil Soup (P170) with carrots, onions and celery. You may pass on salad, but they have good selection. If you prefer fish, order Grandma with Crispy Pata 380 (respect), poached (dark and with the seasonal elements of pork bits and aromatic veggies (P480). Ask for their dessert plate—a sweeting degustation of chocolates, etc.

Operating with usual charges and Senior Citizens discount.

Rating

Kanin Club

Quezon 1 Building, Rizal Ave., Makati, tel. no. 7713400. This is a spin-off from the original eatery in Laguna. Chefs are very innovative.

Dining area: Very small and you are likely to smile awhile. Not much room for customers are maximized. Tables could hardly accommodate orders of more than three dishes. There is a second floor. Simply laid out.

Staff: Regular. Hurried.

Service: For a newcomer in the main, service is comparatively efficient.

Suggested food: Of course, the sous-la-mode Crispy Dinuguan, which has bits of boiled kwek-kwek or bugnoy as the main element (P270). Very good. Binukadkad sa Tilapia, butter-fried crispy fried fish (P220) and Gulay of Sigarillas. Coffee costs P60 and tea, P50.

Service charge is added to the bill. Senior cards honored.

Rating

Schwarzwalder German Restaurant

Ground floor, The Atrium, Makati Avenue, Makati City, tel. no. 8193179. This has a loyal following because food and service have not deteriorated.

Dining area: Cool and welcoming. Tables and chairs are spaced well to allow movement.

Staff: The girls no longer wear the familiar German-inspired uniforms. They now don the casual blouse and skirt set. They are efficient and knowledgeable.

Service: How can an outfit managed by a German gentleman not be clockwork efficient?

Suggested food: What you didn't find with the signature Apple Pancake (P125). While their sausages are really good, we prefer the Bratwurst's Chicken, grilled and garnished with crispy bacon, onions and fried egg on top (P333). Delicious! That would be satisfying and you may not be up for any dessert. Breakfast is also served with choices from a variety of German sausages with knockers in the menu (P470).

Usual 10 percent is charged. Seniors get the 20-percent off.

Rating

THE QUIET DINER
RESTOS AT A GLANCE

Lobsters with tomato-based noodles

E. PINOY: SERVICE WITH FOOD
The Tagbilaran Pasta bar bolsters with fresh baked noodles in tomato sauce. It Pinoy chills bottles of Riesling Italian wine as perfect partners to all those seafood pastas. Corner of Cervantes St. Tagbilaran City. Call 411-0844/45 or text 0917-8097071.

GARLIC Steak Pizza at Basilio's, P131 Forbes Town Center, Rizal Drive, Bonifacio Global City. Call 856 1742 ext.

SEAFOODS GALORE
Blackbeard's Seafood Island offers a variety of seafood fare. The resto is at Eastwood City Libis, Fiesta Market, Market! Fort Bonifacio Global City and Shopwise Arcadia, Araneta Center, Cubao. Call Pl 200/81, 896/5612 or 911 2626.

Poolside barbecue

The Peninsula Manila brings back its hot Off The Grill Poolside Barbecue Buffet until February 2009. Friday and Saturday nights from 6:30–10 p.m. The chefs-in-charge-of-the-poolside-barbecue-buffet are back with garlic-marinated beef tenderloin, citrus- and pepper-marinated tuna and vegetable skewer, teriyaki-marinated beef teriyaki, Mexican-marinated Cajun-spiced smoked pork spare ribs, Cajun-spiced beef burger, lime-marinated king prawns and tender lamb, garlic- and soy-marinated chicken legs and a variety of Peninsula sausages. A new addition is a teppanyaki grilled station. Dine Daddy Crab House and American Grill is located at The Ledge, 8/L, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong (636-0373) and 8/F Bonifacio High Street, Taguig (856-8785).

Healthy breads

Pan de Manila launches Absolutely Zero Sugar Breads. These whole bread variants are the Pan de Manila Sugar Free Whole Bread, Pan de Manila Sugar Free Wheat Loaf. Freshly baked daily inside fresh ovens, and made of pure, healthy, high-quality ingredients including Sun-Rikgard Milk, Golden Whole Wheat Flour, natural fresh shortening, yeast and iodized salt. Pan de Manila Sugar-Free variants are also free from artificial sweeteners which other reputed breads commonly use in their products in place of sugar. Call 0928-6408; e-mail pandemanila_pgh@yahoo.com.

GRILLED FARE
Claw Daddy Crab House and American Grill offers Family Seafood Feast, which includes crabs, Pacific lobsters, freshwater prawns, shrimps, New Zealand Mussels, clams, sausages, corn on a cob, baby potatoes, all simmered in a flavorful seafood broth, and served with lemon butter. Baby back ribs is also offered.

RP cuisine raised the bar in 2008

From page 11

everything I love about food. Sizzling pork with all that good rubbery fatty, crispy crackers. It's just wonderful! And I guess well with beer."

Bourbon was also served: adobo shrimp, crab cooked with coconut milk and chili peppers, and fried and fresh lumpia. No wonder he observed the Philippines is a very foodie culture, though he says it need to push Philippine cuisine if the country wanted to become the next food destination after Singapore, Thailand and Shanghai.

"You push the food. You make it the focus of promotional tourism. Singapore was here so early on in that. They were surprised people were flying all the way there to eat: 'You have to find a way to capture its close images and dishes what is the heart and soul of Filipino cuisine. Then work to promote that. It's really just a matter of filling it (the blanks)," he said.

Battle of the experts. The country's best and brightest culinary talents convened at the first-ever "Food Showdown 2008," the only national culinary competition, at the World Trade Center in Pasay City.

Both professionals and students competed in cooking, cake decorating, table setting, bartending, creative pastries and pastries.

Here an annual event, the Food Showdown is more than just a series of culinary competitions. It is also a venue to showcase and promote culinary professionalism and excellence outside the schools and workplaces, and highlights other aspects of gastronomy aside from cooking.

Twenty-six schools and 16 hotels and restaurants from all over the country took part in the festivities. By the end of the day, the Excluded Lola Dad's Café (Golden Plate Trophy, Overall Winner Professional Category), Makati Shangri-La Hotel (gold, Philippine Gourmet Cold Buffet Challenge), Manila Pavilion (gold, Philippine Creative Cake Decoration), Singapore Institute of Hospitality and Culinary Arts (Golden Plate Trophy, Overall Winner Complete Chef student category), and Center for Culinary Arts (gold, Philippine Creative Cake Decoration).

ENRIQUEZ

CRUZ

Milagros Enriquez-Enriquez was an indefatigable promoter of Bulacan cuisine. The country's foremost food historian and co-author of the book "Bulakeñia," Enriquez, a war veteran, chronicled the recipes cooked during various periods of Philippine history, particularly the flambuoic banquets that were held to bolster relations in the 16th century.

Enriquez's "Tinuyuyan ng Bisita ng Bayan" won the National Book Award. In its pages she also documented the favorite foods of heroes, such as Jose Rizal's pinakbet, sinigang and Gregorio de Jesus' adobong puti.

Larry J. Cruz will always be remembered for his slew of restaurants, as well as many other ventures that showed off his ability to create great concepts, from magazines to books and a spa.

His legacy lives on in his unbeatable trend-setting restaurants—Café Adriatico, Larry's Bar, Café Havana, Bistro Remedios, Bellymood, Abé and Dedy Ze , to name a few.

He didn't only revolutionize local fine dining, he also started the annual "cafe hiraya" that saw only every restaurateur has topped through the years.

The LJC Group has 14 restaurants, cafés and bars in Manila, Makati, Alabang, Quezon City and Cebu City. Among the famous restaurants are Angkong, Poly, Abe Bistro Remedios and Bistro Burgos. Café Havana was established six years ago in Malate and four years later at Ayala Greenbelt in Makati.

On top of being a successful restaurateur, Cruz was also a journalist, publisher and antique collector.

Derek Ching's Olympic dream. Cases on Derek Ching and Silvia Cuan to exalt the most business-like idea—one of them the awesome Bird's Nest Cake to gain years and chocolate, which made its global debut during the Beijing 2008 Olympics.

The show-stopping single-layered cake was the centerpiece at an exclusive event organized by Coca-Cola.

Pedik Ching's dream to create a cake to commemorate the Olympics began two years ago, but it was only last year that the ball started rolling. The main architectural idea to the Olympic bird's nest stadium in May, and the first cake was baked in June, shaped into the stadium's design, then was covered with marzipan. The tones she got for the dazzling color made all her hard work worthwhile.

Environment-friendly New Year's resolution

THE CONSUMER
Linda B. Bohlin

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

For those who make it a habit to draw up New Year's resolutions, you can add adopting a more environmentally friendly lifestyle to your list. Helping protect and conserve nature will not only secure our future but also that of our children and grandchildren.

And the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) announced shifting to a more dynamic-friendly lifestyle need not require drastic changes or major sacrifices. In fact, it says people can start right away to "Kick the CO2 habit."

Carbon dioxide or CO_2 is the main greenhouse gas. Its combination with other gases in the earth's lower atmosphere traps heat in the atmosphere instead of letting it escape into space, producing an effect similar to that in a greenhouse.

This is causing a warming of the earth threatening, among others, to melt polar ice caps that will, in turn, result in rise in sea levels that will flood low-lying and coastal areas.

In an earlier column, I mentioned how traveling light (carrying below 20 kg of goods and items when flying) and going by road to destinations that can be reached by car, bus or train, can make a significant contribution to reducing CO_2 emissions.

UNEP has other suggestions on how ecotravelers can also reduce their carbon footprints.

People who need an alarm to wake up in the morning will save almost 38 g of CO_2 each day with a traditional wind-up clock rather than an electronic one. From personal experience, I know you are also less likely to ignore the shrill ringing of a wind-up alarm clock than the gentle beeping of its electronic counterpart.

Drying clothes on a washing line instead of a tumble dryer will prevent the release into the atmosphere of some 2.3 kg of CO_2 (except perhaps for condominium dwellers, many Filipinos still have space to hang their clothes and let the sun and air dry them).

The fitness buff can reduce his/her carbon footprint by exercising a 45-minute workout on a treadmill rather than a jog in a nearby park or any open space. UNEP says, "This saves nearly 1 kg of the main greenhouse gas."

Modest but effective

The UN agency says the purchase of other appliances to buy will help reduce CO_2 emissions. Achim Steiner, UN undersecretary general and UNEP executive director, said though some of the initiatives might seem small and modest, "but multiplied across the world and several years by 6.5 billion people, the results have the power to dramatically and collectively influence economies to 'Kick the CO_2 Habit.'"

Other lifestyle changes you may want to consider to reduce your carbon footprints:

• Using a nonelectric toothbrush will avoid nearly 46 g of CO_2 emissions; heating bread rolls in a toaster rather than an oven for 15 minutes saves nearly 170 g of CO_2, switching from regular 60-watt light bulbs to energy-saving ones will produce four times less greenhouse gases; taking the stairs rather than the car by a daily office commuter of as little as eight kilometers will save a big 1.7 kg of CO_2; sharing down the computer and fax screen hardcopying lunch breaks and other socializing hours will cut CO_2 emissions generated by these appliances by one-third; and investing in a water-saving shower head will not only save 30 liters of water per minute, but will also slash CO_2 emissions resulting from a three-minute hot shower by half.

Heating less temperature room, cooling and lighting homes and using household appliances one up over less per cent of global energy supplied. Buildings account for almost 30 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions—perhaps even more—according to UNEP's "Sustainable Building and Construction Initiative."

• A 130-liter refrigerator with a freezer that is 4 to 5 rated (the rating system indicates how energy efficient an appliance is) emits over 1,316 g less in CO_2 than a comparable A-rated one.

Former said Green Economy was starting to emerge across the world fueled by the "sobering sentiment on the impacts of climate change... but also the abundant economic opportunities it economics become more resources-efficient."

The changes, he said, were being demanded by companies and consumers and countries were responding to the demand. It is about time Filipino consumers make the same demand of their governments. The much-vaunted elections in November on sources of the Philippines will not but forever without any debate and committed other to preserve and protect such diversity.

Those who are interested to know more about how they can be more climate conscious might want to check out the UN-Efficient 'Kick the Habit: The UN Guide to Climate Neutrality' by visiting www.unep.org.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5/F Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5/F Philippine Daily Inquirer Building, 5/F Philippine Daily Inquirer Building, 5/F Philippine Daily Inquirer Building

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INSIDE
Lea Salonga's New Year resolutions
Backstory /D4

ARNEL Pineda

JELENA Magdangal

Why the stars loved 2008

THE LAST DAY OF THE YEAR IS NOT really the end. It's just a pause before a fresh start. As we bid 2008 goodbye, celebs revisit what they loved most about the past year.

But first, thanks to all of my fans! Ang mga readers for "Dollywooding" with me and to the stars, who were in the mix for all the fun in the way of our friendship. I have a blast sha! Now I want ...

GLORIA DIAZ: "Grand health, great tennis and happy kids."

ARNEL PINEDA: "Being part of Journey. It has made me see great. I only dreamt about before."

MARIAN AGUILAR: "I got into anthony Courth studies balance, rhythm and focus which are also useful in my acting jobs, restaurant business and basketball."

LOU TORRES-GOMEZ: "Career-wise, it was extremely romantic from both the DMV and the GMMA for 'Shall We Dance' and 'The Sweet Life,' respectively. In my personal life, it was meaningful conversations with my friends and deeper love in my family."

MIRIAM QUIAMBAO: "When Christ was born again in my heart. I got to experience His love through unseen, family and friends."

THORSON RUBIO: "Going back to school."

BEN ONCE: "When ABS-CBN announced that I will be playing the role of Jasmine in the remake of 'My Girl.'"

LANI MERCADO: "The birth of my first granddaughter."

PAOLO CONTIS: "Being part of the Comedy Top 10 Battalion."

NYOY VOLANTE: "Going back to my theater roots. After six years, I got the chance to be part of the musical 'Himpapaw.'"

MARK BEDIO: "Never ako nabakante sa trabaho plus our family has remained intact and even grew by bigger."

JOLINA MAGDANGAL: "Taking a cruise in Europe and having two days straight of free time para mag general cleaning ng room ko mag-isa."

PHOEMELA BARANDA: "I was able to be a part of 'Pinoy Boy Dance.'"

BO CHORUDO: "My very successful Cebuano series at the Cinemo's first, my well-rendered CD and moving to my new house in QC."

MARK GIL: "Becoming the first dance couples to my son Jiel at the Ateneo. The year has been filled by cooking long hot friends-reunion."

E-mail entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

JELENA Magdangal

Thoroughly independent Tetchie

By Rayzel San Diego Jr.

SHE SOUNDS THOROUGHLY like a teacher in Art Appreciation class.

Tetchie Agbayani, who won Best Supporting Actress for Richard Somes' "Sanggre" at the recent Cinema One Originals film fest, explains that digital movie is not just a horror flick: "The making is a metaphor for any affliction that threatens the family."

Tetchie ... who made a splash as a Pinay boy counterfeit in an earlier celebrity incarnation—now teaches Guidance and Counseling for Special Children at St. Joseph's College in Quezon City.

Teaching is a relief of sorts today in the otherwise abnormal work schedule of an actress. Tetchie views, but the thrill of acting remains irresistible.

She has two movies in the works, one indie, the other mainstream...Chito Roño's thriller "72" for Star Cinema and Fina Torres's period drama "Independencia" for Cinemagration (Philippines) and Magic (France).

Coincidentally, "Independencia" co-operative Rodeo Tantiansu was Tetchie's teacher in college. "I still call him 'sir.' I found out he wrote the script only when I saw his name on my copy."

The outspoken actress says the actress was a conscientious student who never ran out of questions.

But right now, it is the actress who answers questions for budding readers.

What's it like working with independent directors?

It's always refreshing to work with young people. With them, the whole process is creative. It's not bound up or dependent on formula. With indie filmmakers, you can explore and experiment.

What's the challenge of doing 'Independencia,' a period film shot entirely in in a studio?

From the script, I read that the setting is a jungle. At first, I couldn't understand the filmmaker's goal. I thought shooting is in a studio was attractive, but I wasn't sure if we could pull it off.

But on the first day—the rushes were wonderful. Pio Torres is French cinematographer (Jeanne Lapoirie who worked in Fatmata Diaw's "Il Vincere") whose work is mind-blowing!

Teacher finds time for the movies again

Now I can see the director's vision. I believe that our job as actors is to help the director realize his vision. Here, in period costume, dark makeup and disheveled hair, getting into character is a breeze.

How long does it take for you to get displacement?

An hour. It's not so tedious. Working in a studio is great because all the area you within reach. It's not tiring moving from one set to another.

What's it like working with Ed Lacson in "Independencia"?

We worked in (the ABS-CBN soap) "Lipon na Bulalak" before this movie and we hit it off right away.

Did you get to work with his dad, Mark Gil, in the past?

Yes, in Eddie Romero's "Brutes" in 1982. I was teasing Mark at the Cinema One awards: My father/tatay in your son, not you...He is dead!

How do you see your character, the Mother?

I like her a lot. She's strong and determined. When the Americans arrive, she takes her son, flees to the jungle and decides to stay there until the fighting is over.

Are you still teaching?

Yes. Every Wednesday. I have only one subject this semester: Guidance and Counseling for Special Children.

School is a totally different world.

Ay, oo, 180 degrees now! The lessons are carnal—unlike in the movies, where the lanes are longer and unpredictable. The trick is to blend the two worlds.

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

ACTION STARTS ON JAN. 8

WHERE James Bond HAS FAILED... Transporter DELIVERS

"The film boasts a measure of the RETRO MACHISMO, STYLE and ATTITUDE some 007 fans have found lacking in 'Quantum of Solace'."

"With a rebooted James Bond in Daniel Craig bringing the action genre back down to earth, Jason Statham's DASHING ACTION MAN has stepped into the vacuum and give audiences the shallow, dopey, GADGET-HEAVY, ANTI-REALISTIC THRILLS they deserve."

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DASMARINAS

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2 TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
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5 BALER

IMUS

1 DESPERADAS
2 TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
3 DAYO
4 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL X
5 BAHAY NA PULA
6 BALER

ANGELES

1 BAHAY NA PULA
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3 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL X
4 BALER

STARMILLS

1 BALER
2 ONE NIGHT ONLY
3 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL X
4 DESPERADAS
5 TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
6 DAYO

BACOLOD

1 BAHAY NA PULA
2 TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
3 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL X
4 DESPERADAS
5 BALER
6 ONE NIGHT ONLY

ILOILO

1 MAGKAIBIGAN
2 BAHAY NA PULA
3 ONE NIGHT ONLY
4 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL X
5 TANGING INA NYONG LAHAT
6 DESPERADAS

Thoroughly independent Tetchie

Previous D1

...aside their incompatibilities.

Your role was originally offered to Vilma Santos. Do you mind taking over another actress' part?

Oh, not at all. When it was offered to me, I didn't know they had considered somebody else. Well, I also didn't ask. It's really out my concern. They ought to know who to get.

I don't have any qualms about stepping into somebody else's role. No problem.

What's your take on the international interest in Filipino movies, considering you made Hollywood films ("The Mommy Pa," "The Emerald Forest," etc.) in the past?

I hope it continue; it's about time. That's the effect of globalization. The world is shrinking. Everyone is interconnected now.

There are a lot of local indie films with top directors; it would be nice if we could also send our movies that will reflect positive. That's why I'm happy that "Yanggaw" was invited to the Hong Kong Film Festival (in March).

Film like "Yanggaw" and "Independencia" are very Filipino in flavor. It highlights our culture. But what I love about "Independencia" is that it has a Pinoy look and a European sensibility. That's very interesting.

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It's another brand new year

BACK STORY

Lea Salonga

SINGAPORE—WHERE DID LAST year go? It seems like only yesterday that 2008 was starting.

And now, 2009 has officially begun... another year full of potential... promises... and promises.

It's that time of year when everyone, no matter his/her station in life, resumes that mythical list of tasks and to-do's for the coming year. Another list of, yes, promises that will most likely be kept for just a few weeks or months ... or not at all.

Nonetheless, I've decided to compile my own list of resolutions. It's become quite the custom for me to write down what I'd like to accomplish or achieve in the next 12 months. As far as my professional aspirations are concerned, there are factors that determine its success—one of which is the present absurd state of the world economy—so I'm going to jot down only things that are fully within my control in that, no matter what's going on in the world, good or bad, I should be able to tick those items off one by one.

I'll let you know at year's end how I did.

And so, without further ado, here are my resolutions for 2009:

1) Eat more healthy.

2) Exercise at least three times a week.

3) Sleep at a more decent hour ... like before 2 a.m.

4) Improve my style reading.

5) Relearn how to play the piano.

6) Learn to play a new musical instrument, just for fun.

7) Stay more on top of my finances.

8) Be better at remembering birthdays, anniversaries and other special events.

9) Complain less when stuck in unseasonal Manila traffic... only because there isn't anything I'll be able to do about it.

10) See more shows, museum and other musical events.

11) Stay away from coffee 3) quit drinking this delicious beverage a month ago; my stomach is much happier for it).

12) Get my family to an allergist [allergy clinic] to see exactly what it is we're allergic to, individually.

13) Start and finish the "Stieg Larsson" and "Twilight" series of books.

14) Learn a new word every day.

15) Refrain from buying first-generation technology.

16) Drink more water.

17) Let common sense rule, as much as possible.

18) Save... save... and save some more.

19) Update my blogs more regularly.

20) Be better at remembering my friends' birthdays, and miraculously greet them.

21) Give my mother less grief [with the gym, she gets her share of it from me from time to time].

22) Cook... or, in, stand over a hot stove every so often and create a good meal.

23) Introduce my daughter to the music that has influenced me as a musician and an artist (musical theater, film soundtracks and selected pop music).

24) Improve my spoken and written Filipino.

25) Visit more of the Philippines... [It's a shame that I don't see as much of my own country as I should.

26) Listen to more classical music.

27) Find out more about the dance learning... that college degree can't be that hard to get, can it?

28) Finish that bloated novel!

29) Read the "NGC" and "FIC" again, and never forget the reason [and spirit] in which they were written.

> This year, I will stay away from coffee, learn a new word every day, and get my family to an allergist

30) Be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Congratulations

Hearty congratulations to my brother Gerard for a successful run of shows at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.

You'll get a big hug of donuts when I get home!

Favorite '08 interviews

By the Entertainment Staff

THREE GOLDEN GIRLS AND a golden guy were among Bagard San Diego Jr.'s favorite interviewees in the past year. San Diego's accurate:

"Pierre's Miss del Sol, original Starving Girl of Philippine movies. After making her debut in 'Ollie Ho' in 1939, the DJV aspirant had breakfast to intoxicating with President Manuel Quezon. My chat with Ms Mila took unexpected and engaging twists and turns.

"The second golden girl is the irrepressible Nelsa Linda, who explained her reasons for not attending the Upsynsdale awards this: it's Maki-sulilang Lent October, thus: 'It was my gardening day. I also cleaned out the garage. My hands were greasy. My hair was dirty.'

"But this multi-awarded artist is proud of her Guatemala Boat license citation for her stellar work in Nobisi — it's her first nomination all night.

"Third is Gloria Romero, geniune movie queen. On Dec. 16, on of her 75th birthday, she excelled how she struggled with not a tear was worth in her latest movie, 'Nadasa.' She also revealed what goes on in her mind during

CHARO Santos-Concio: The interview was unhurried, the subject was focused and in the moment.

ANITA Linda didn't go to one awards program because it fell on her gardening day. "My hair was dirty." Well, she's correct then.

domestic errors—reminiscences of old movies, like losing her nose after Weight Pier 8 and taking care of husband Jeanette Dolorosa in his last days.

Forever had their time with Australian Comedian Maggot Brian Gunnell, who visited Philippine castles upside down in March when he started his awarding left-all on Manila's 'high' society. But his candor and humor shone through in one 1-round exchanges and phone chats, earning him a place on my list."

Acid test

Marisol S. Cruz was deeply touched by this friendship "from initially whom most relationships are fleeting." Her choice of best interview in 2008 is the one she did in June with actress Phillipa Hollywater, sorcerer. Bragg's Gerardo and Bong Revilla shortly after their buddy, Nady "Dubay" Fernandez, was laid to rest.

She recalls: "Their answers to all my questions were spontaneous and straightforward. Did Dubay's death make them even closer? Phillipa's reply: 'Hospitalist more so Dubay — magnanimous, magnificent, magnificalogues. I'd make a bullet for [any one of] them.'

"And how were they all holding up? I asked. Bragga said he still constantly thought of everything that happened. Bong seemed philosophical, saying, 'Kung ano ano na, nasa sino na. Nasa kay Isaac na ito, good things and bad words.'

"But the mic also had fun during the interview, teasing one another. Who dated the most women? I asked. Bong quipped, 'Ano pa, e 'di si

CHARO Santos-Concio: The interview was unhurried, the subject was focused and in the moment.

Dubay! Nilo na nemen yan. If at ako ang mahihingan ng kuro-kuro," Bragga added. 'Si Dubay, very discreet. Si Bong, very indiscreet.' Phillipa would not let that pass; he asked Bragga, 'Was all his he subdubating?' Bong listened to, Phillipa exhibited ng power ken."

Cruz also found Dubay's son, Mark Anthony Fernandez, forthright, if a bit vulnerable, during a conversation in September before he sat down with Inquirer. Our words, "Mark had control issues all together for interviewed." This mention of those who all lost border her house:

"I asked him, 'So, you're a little okay now?' He said, 'I'd like to think I am ... though I doubt that I'll really ever be.'

Possibly the most publicized show biz breakup last year was that of Dingdong Dantes and Marian Rivera. Cruz feels the area is coming.

"During my interview with Karylle for the story, 'My Irony Boyfriend' Drips. 332, she seemed more reserved than usual when asked

MARK Anthony Fernandez had to tear down old wounds for an interview until he was ready, just our luck.

about their lingered fight as a couple. She said, 'I'd feel weird answering that show.'

"Shortly after that, news of their split-up broke. I later caught up with Dingdong on a movie set in Davao, Panabangan. Like Karylle, he refused to discuss the issue by himself, saying, 'We promised each other to answer all questions together. I would like things to happen on her terms.' A week later, it confirmed the breakup."

Rematch

The first time Emeran G. Maceda interviewed Rudy Fernandez was just after his separation from Alma Moreno. The 2nd time was six weeks before he lost a long and painful battle with cancer. What Maceda remembers most acutely about that last sit-down was how Dubay did everything to make her feel comfortable.

"He looked well, he was bubbly, but I knew he was sick, of course, and he knew I didn't feel good about that. [Cristy] said a TV show summoned us amid a crew to sit in but that Rudy just wanted to spend a quiet afternoon with his ex-wife and he hadn't seen her in a long time.

"He reminded me of that very first interview 12 years ago to be exact! I said, yes, he was a tough nut who refused to say anything about Alma. He promised to make up for that by answering everything I'd ask that day. He did."

Another teasing Dubay is Mandy's pick — not just because "it was the last long interview he gave and held nothing back," but more so because "he seemed so much for me to learn as much as possible from his own experience—the very essence, for me, of generosity."

The only other memorable 2008 interview for Inlander was with MILCIDS president Charo Santos-Concio. "It was rather brief—about 20 mins—but packed to capacity with hard facts and [a] serious personal sharing."

Santos-Concio herself believe found to be "focused, in the moment... she dictates you into a space where the exchange is free-flowing and unguarded."

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 MALL CLOSED
2 MALL CLOSED
3 MALL CLOSED
4 MALL CLOSED
MALL CLOSED

Holiday Pleasures in store for you at the Shang!

Get a chance to drive home a brand new 2009 Volvo S40 2.4L Sedan

Shangri-La Plaza

TV caravan in Star City

CHEER FACTOR

"TV5 GOK SHARE MO TV MO CARAVAN" greets the New Year with celebrity gatherings, live tapings and musical performances from rock bands Sandwich and Imago on Jan. 3 in Star City. Show time is 10 a.m. to 12 midnight.

It will free tickets, interested persons/audiences may join online promos at the TV5 website, www.tv5.com.ph, or enroll at Star City's side-all-you-can pass.

Students may also present their school ID or proof of purchase of any TV5 recently item from the store set-up on the event grounds to watch the show.

IMAGO

MTRCB PG-13 Children under 13 must be accompanied by an adult.

10x the HORROR! 10x the TERROR! 10x the SCARE!

Get FREE Enchanted Kingdom tickets on January 1 to every moviegoers of Shake Rattle and Roll X. Offer is good while supplies last.